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FORET de GREMECEY-FOREST

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In late September 1944, Third US Army was ordered to halt its advance in Lorraine and go over to the defensive. XII Corps consolidated its position east of Nancy; 35th ID(-) secured the Foret de Gremecy, which commanded the main highway to the city from the east. The division defended initially minus its third regiment, which was in corps reserve. On 26 September, the Germans launched a deliberate attack to penetrate 35th ID sector and re-take Nancy. By the 28th, the Germans had established a foothold in the Foret; all three regiments from 35th ID were engaged. A US counterattack on the 29th was defeated, and heavy close combat raged throughout the day and night. Despite orders to halt the attack, the next morning XIII SS Pz Corps launched its heaviest assault with elements of four divisions. The 35th ID steadily was forced back, and the division commander committed his last reserves. The Commander, XII (US) Corps, worried that the Germans would isolate and destroy US forces east of the Seille River, ordered the 35th ID to withdraw. The Third Army Commander personally countermanded the order and directed XII Corps to counterattack with 6th Armored Division. The 35th ID held. On 1 October the 6th AD attacked through the 35th ID and seized key terrain north and east of the Foret. 35th ID consolidated the gains and relieved 6th AD that night. The Germans began their withdrawal, and on 2 October 35th ID cleared the Foret de Gremecy of enemy forces.

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Forêt de Grémecey

Defensive, Defense, Forest

American:

Third U.S. Army
XII U.S. Corps
35th Infantry
Division
6th Armored
Division

German:

First German Army
XIII Panzer Corps
559th Volksgrenadier
Division
19th Volksgrenadier
Division (-)
106th Panzer Brigade
(elms) 15th Panzer
Grenadier Division
(elms) 553rd Volksgrenadier
Division

September - October 1944

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Submitted to the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army
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of the requirements for subcourse P651, Battle Analysis.

MAY 1984

This analysis is dedicated to our wives and
families who have endured "the best year of our lives."

Staff Group 11B

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
CHAPTER 1. The Battle of Forêt de Grémecey	1-1
Date, Location and Principle Antagonists (1-1), Sources (1-2), Evaluation of Sources (1-2).	
CHAPTER 2. THE STRATEGIC SETTING	2-1
The Causes of the Conflict (2-1), The Antagonists (2-2).	
CHAPTER 3. THE TACTICAL SITUATION	3-1
A Study of the Area of Operation (3-1), Comparison of Opposing Forces (3-13), Military Objectives of Each Antagonist (3-33), Feasible Courses of Action (3-37).	
CHAPTER 4. THE BATTLE: 26 SEPTEMBER - 1 OCTOBER 1944 .	4-1
The Action (4-1), Key Events (4-59), The Outcome (4-60).	
CHAPTER 5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTION	5-1
The Immediate Significance (5-1), Long-term Significance (5-2), Lessons Learned (5-2).	
APPENDIX A. AREA AND BATTLE MAPS - FORET DE GREMECEY .	A-1
APPENDIX B. NOTES	B-1
APPENDIX C. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY	C-1

ABSTRACT

COMMON REFERENCE: Forêt de Grémecey (September-October 1944)

TYPE OF OPERATION: Defensive, Defense, Forest

OPPOSING FORCES: American: Third U.S. Army
XII U.S. Corps
35th Infantry Division
6th Armored Division

German: First German Army
XIII SS Panzer Corps
559th Volksgrenadier Division
19th Volksgrenadier
Division (-)
106th Panzer Brigade
(elms) 15th Panzer
Grenadier Division
(elms) 553rd Volksgrenadier
Division

SYNOPSIS: In September 1944, the Third U.S. Army, under LTG Patton, was ordered to halt its advance in Lorraine due to logistics shortages primarily caused by the priority given to Montgomery's forces in the North. Upon assuming the defensive, XII Corps, commanded by MG Eddy, found itself astride the major highway leading to Nancy from the east and in possession of both Nancy and the Forêt de Grémecey, from whose high ground the highway could be controlled. The 35th Infantry Division, minus its third regiment, which was designated the Corps reserve, was given the mission of securing and defending the Forêt de Grémecey. On 26 September the Germans launched an attack in the 35th Division sector with the ultimate objective of retaking Nancy. By 28 September all three regiments of the 35th Division were fully engaged, and German forces had established a foothold in the forest. On 29 September U.S. forces attempted a counterattack which was unsuccessful. On the 30th, although ordered to halt the attack, the XIII SS Panzer Corps attacked with elements of four divisions. The 35th Division lost ground steadily, and committed its reserves. MG Eddy, fearing encirclement of forces east of the Seille River, ordered the withdrawal of the 35th Division. LTG Patton, alerted by a staff officer, personally countermanded Eddy's order and ordered a counterattack using the 6th Armored Division. This attack was launched just as the German's were withdrawing, and thus was successful. The 6th Armored Division conducted

a passage of lines through the 35th Division's positions on 1 October and seized key terrain east of the forest. The 35th ID mopped up and releived the 6th AD on the night of 1 October. The Germans withdrew, and on 2 October the 35th Infantry Division cleared the Forêt de Grémecey of enemy forces.

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CHAPTER 1

THE BATTLE OF FORET DE GREMECEY

A. Date, Location and Principle Antagonists.

The Forêt de Grémecey battle took place in northeastern France. Specifically the action occurred east of Nancy in the area around the Grémecey and Château-Salins forests (see maps at Appendix A) from 26 September until 2 October 1944.

The opposing forces were:

American: Third U.S. Army

XII U.S. Corps

35th Infantry Division

6th Armored Division

German: 1st German Army

XIII SS Panzer Corps

559th Volksgrenadier Division

19th Volksgrenadier Division

106th Panzer Brigade

elements of:

15th Panzer Grenadier Division

The Battle of Forêt de Grémecey

553rd Volksgrenadier Division

B. The Sources.

Information on the Forêt de Grémecey battle, although sparse, is surprisingly varied. The variety of authors includes writers from both sides of the conflict, both military and civilian and at differing levels of command. The type of sources range from Corps level G2/G3 message files during the battle to official after action reports, documentary reports, historical analyses and doctrinal critiques.

C. Evaluation of Sources.

The most authoritative American source is The Lorraine Campaign prepared under the direction of H. M. Cole and published by the U.S. Government after the war. This book is one of a nine volume series and was based upon unit journals, after action reports and interviews conducted by historical officers during and after the battle. The German side came primarily from war diaries (KTB's) and from manuscript histories prepared after the war by German

The Battle of Forêt de Grémecey

officers who played a part in the action. The text includes an excellent synopsis of the Forêt de Grémecey battle and a number of excellent maps. (See maps at Appendix A).

Other American sources include official after action reports such as those prepared by the Allied Expeditionary Force and by the Third U.S. Army. These documents, while complete with statistics and chronologies, fail to provide the real flavor of the action that is presented in historical works such as those by Blumenson (The Duel for France and The Patton Papers) and Essame (Patton: A Study in Command). Albums, such as The 35th Infantry Division in World War II, 1941-1945, while providing little primary source material, do provide some human interest aspects of the battle and could also be used as a start in locating participants for interview purposes.

The German perspective came primarily from German officers, most notably F. W. Von Mellenthin. The German writings, while more scarce, are focused on the doctrinal aspects of the battle and for that reason are most valuable sources. In several instances the German perspective provided an interesting view of American failures to exploit operational advantages.

The Battle of Forêt de Grémecey

In summary, the primary source material for this battle, while adequate, is certainly not abundant. This suggests a need for continued research and efforts to interview those participants of the battle that are still alive. The Annotated Bibliography, at Appendix C, provides a more detailed look at each individual source.

CHAPTER 2

THE STRATEGIC SETTING

A. The Causes of the Conflict.

The battle of Forêt de Grémecey was a World War II battle which occurred at the beginning of the Lorraine Campaign in September 1944, following the dramatic breakout of Allied forces from Normandy and the rapid advance across France.

The adversaries in the battle were U.S. forces of Patton's Third U.S. Army and German forces of Balck's First German Army. American forces visualized the Lorraine Campaign to be a continuation of the dizzying sweep that they had experienced in their drive from Normandy. They hoped for a rapid drive through Lorraine, breaching of the West Wall, followed immediately by a crossing of the Rhine River into the heart of Germany. These goals were thwarted in early September by a combination of bad weather, fierce German resistance and a disastrous logistical situation caused by their earlier rapid advance and the fact that logistics priority had shifted to Montgomery's forces in the north. The Third Army was ordered to assume defensive

The Strategic Setting

positions in early September. The battle of Forêt de Grémecey was one of the first defensive battles of the European war for the U.S. forces.

B. The Antagonists

U.S. forces in the battle were spread quite thin across the defensive front. Although they were flushed with victory by their rapid dash across France, they were very short on combat experience compared to their German adversaries. They had outrun their logistics train and were short on many critical supplies. All the Americans were unfamiliar with the terrain, having just recently occupied it, and perhaps above all, were lacking in experience of defensive operations.

German forces were badly depleted both by draining of combat power to the rapidly deteriorating eastern front and by their headlong retreat across France in front of pursuing Allied forces. Though somewhat short of hardened combat veterans because of the priority of the eastern front, their troops were more battle hardened than the Americans. Due to his thin forces Balck had adopted a policy of elastic, mobile defense. The fact that his commanders were intimately

The Strategic Setting

familiar with the terrain was to German advantage. Although morale was low in the depleted German forces, they had their backs to German soil, and thus had a quality of desperation keeping them going.

The following account sets the strategic stage for the battle:

The U.S. Third Army was born on 28 July 1944, amid the drama of Operation Cobra in the Normandy hedgerows. In a matter of days, Patton's force of nine divisions had made a decisive penetration of the German lines. "As a result of the breakthrough of the enemy armored spearheads," said German Army Group B commander Guenther von Kluge, "the whole Western Front has been ripped wide open." Von Kluge's words proved eminently accurate. Within one week, Brest, Lorient, and St. Nazaire were invested by Patton's forces; within two weeks, the German Army in Normandy was virtually destroyed in the Falaise Pocket. By 19 August, the Third Army was driving almost unopposed toward the Seine and beyond in the area south of Paris. "We have been going so fast," wrote Patton, "that our chief difficulty consists in our inability to emulate Ariadne and keep our spiderweb behind us. Our supply people, however, have really done marvels, and we always have sufficient of everything...The weather has been just as good as it was for the

The Strategic Setting

Germans in 1940, and also for them in Poland in 1939."

The end of August saw the Third Army penetrating even further eastward, seizing bridgeheads across the Meuse River and reconnoitering the west bank of the Moselle. Little did Patton realize that the Moselle would block his progress for the next three months, frustrating his grandiose schemes of ending the war in one glorious blow. Optimistically, Patton wrote, "We have at this time, the greatest chance to win the war ever presented. If they will let me move on with three corps on the line of Metz-Nancy-Epinal, we can be in Germany in ten days. It can be done with three armored and six infantry divisions. It is such a sure thing that I fear these blind moles don't see it."

However, by the beginning of September, numerous difficulties were arising among the advancing Allied armies, the most frustrating problem being logistics. Quite simply, the Allies, particularly Patton, had envisioned a more orderly campaign and, as a result, the plentiful supplies stockpiled in Normandy could not be transported to the fighting armies fast enough to maintain a mobile campaign. Patton's supply lines stretched 400 miles from Verdun to Cherbourg. The trucks and trailers of the "Red Ball Express" were supplying the Third Army with only 2,000 tons of supplies per day, some of which had to be rerouted to Paris to provide for its civilians. "At the present

The Strategic Setting

time," said Patton on 28 August, "our chief difficulty is not the Germans but gasoline. If they would give me enough gas, I could go anywhere I want."

By early September 1944, a great debate was arising among Allied strategic planners over the merits and disadvantages of Eisenhower's "broad front" advance across France. British 21st Army Group commander, Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, pointed out the logistical nightmare which the Allies were currently facing, forcefully stating his case for a concerted drive toward the industrial German Ruhr. Of course, his force's assault would require virtually all available supply, leaving Patton's Third Army almost bone dry.

Upon pondering the problem, Eisenhower finally decided that in order to clear the Scheldt Estuary, Antwerp, and the V-rocket launching sites, Montgomery and 21st Army Group would get priority in supply for the time being. "For a very considerable time," Eisenhower wrote, "I was of the belief that we could carry out the operation of the northeast simultaneously with the thrust eastward, but later I have concluded that due to the tremendous importance of the objectives in the northeast, we must first concentrate on that movement."

Patton was disgusted. His Army was, for all intents and purposes, stopped in its tracks. "Eisenhower kept talking of the future great

The Strategic Setting

battle of Germany," Patton wrote after meeting with the Supreme Commander. "We assured him that the Germans have nothing left to fight with if we push on now. If we wait, there will be a great battle of Germany...God deliver us from our friends. We can handle the enemy."

During this delay, the Germans undertook the formidable task of preparing their defenses. On 3 September, Army Group B could only muster 100 tanks, while in one area, eight battalions of infantry defended a frontage of 120 kilometers! However, on 5 September, the respected old veteran, General-Feldmarschall Gerd von Rundstedt, returned to the Western Front as German commander-in-chief of the OB West. Two days before, Hitler had personally ordered a concentration of armor opposite Patton on the Moselle. In this area, the German First Army was strengthened considerably in mid-September in expectation of a U.S. Third Army push into the industrial Saarland, a sensitive nerve in Hitler's frontier defenses. "Both as regards quality and diversity," an Allied intelligence report stated, "the enemy force opposing us shows the effects of the recent measures in Germany to step up the national effort. Paratroop and pilots, policeman and sailors, boys of 16 and men with ulcers - all of these have been through the corps cage in the last few days."

As for Patton, the offensive was still the catchword, supply or no supply. "I am doing my

The Strategic Setting

damndest to get going again, but it is hard," he wrote to his wife. "Once people stop, they get cautious and the enemy get set." In protest over the supply situation, Patton, together with his Army Group commander Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, offered to resign on 15 September. However, both men eventually backed down. Instead, Patton chose a more devious method of avoiding SHAEF: "I must get so involved in operations that they can't stop me," he wrote. "I told Bradley not to call me until after dark on 19 September. He agreed." Meanwhile, Patton would advance by what he called the "rock-soup" method. ("A tramp once went to a house and asked for some water to make rock-soup. The lady was interested and gave him the water, in which he placed two stones. He then asked if he might have some potatoes and carrots to put in the soup to flavor it a little, and finally ended up with some meat. In other words, in order to attack, we must first pretend to reconnoiter and then reinforce the reconnaissance and then finally attack. It is a very sad method of making war.")

In middle and late September, Patton's three available corps assaulted the Moselle line with limited resources against increasing German resistance. Nevertheless, the attacks were moderately successful, although painfully slow. In the south, XV Corps (Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip) penetrated the Moselle and captured the Alsatian city of Epinal. In Patton's center sector, XII Corps (Maj. Gen. Manton S. Eddy) established a

The Strategic Setting

Moselle bridgehead after bitter fighting in the Pont a Mousson area. The critical rail center of Nancy fell to Eddy on 15 September. In the north, XX Corps (Maj. Gen. Walton Walker) faced the difficult Metz defenses, but managed to sidestep them to the south with the 5th Infantry Division - establishing bridgeheads over the Moselle in two separate places.

On 18 September, Hitler ordered a series of limited counterattacks against these bridgeheads, after it was noted that "Fifth Panzer Army shows a marked tendency to limit itself to defensive action." After these counterattacks proved abortive, Hitler sacked Generaloberst Johannes Blaskowitz (commander of Army Group G) and replaced him with one of his favorites, General der Panzertruppen Hermann Balck. Balck was truly a worthy rival to Patton. Employing a very similar style of personal aggressiveness (he had been wounded six times), Balck's dynamic leadership of armored formations advanced his career meteorically. In Russia, he rose from the command of the famous 11th Panzer Division to the XLVII Panzer Corps in the bitter fighting around Kiev, Radomyshl, and Tarnopol in November 1943. From 1 August to 20 September 1944, he was in command of 4th Panzer Army. However, Rundstedt and other high-ranking German officers in the West looked upon Balck with disfavor, probably because he was an ardent Nazi and a favorite of Hitler's. He also

The Strategic Setting

had no Western Front experience - he had been in Russia almost continually since 1941.

Upon assuming his position, Balck willingly submitted his Army Group to Hitler's personal strategic guidelines. The Fuehrer had no intention whatsoever of acceding to Rundstedt's plan of withdrawal to the West Wall; instead, Hitler ordered his force to defend where they stood, particularly along the line of the Moselle. Envisioning Patton's drive as the major Allied effort, Hitler ordered Balck to center his defense on the Metz-Thionville fortifications, while building up secondary defensive lines to the rear. In addition, the West Wall in this area was to be reinforced considerably.

Metz has always been an historic city in military terms. Although a vital location in many European campaigns for centuries, it had not fallen to direct assault since 1552. In the Franco-Prussian War, it was captured after a 54-day seige in October 1870. In the First World War, it had been heavily fortified by the Germans, but after 1918, the fortifications were allowed to deteriorate after the city passed back into French hands. Militarily, the forts surrounding Metz were antiquated by 1944, but the psychological benefits of the fortified position to the retreating German troops allowed Balck to evolve his defense around this position.

Due to the weak forces and poor equipment at his disposal, Balck immediately opted for the

The Strategic Setting

tactic of mobile or "elastic" defense on the Army Group G front. Imitating the late First World War German trench defense schemes, Balck planned to keep his front lines almost denuded of troops. As a result, the terrific initial American artillery barrage and air bombardments would be hitting virtually nothing of importance. If an armored or infantry assault followed up, the forward German positions would be easily overrun. However, the attack would soon meet the main bodies of German infantry in secondary defensive lines, almost untouched by the air strikes and bombardment. Taking this tactic one step further, Balck told Rundstedt that he intended to counterattack any American breakthrough "on the spot" with mobile formations left behind the front line just for this purpose.

In order to slow down the initial American penetrations through the weak front lines of his mobile defense, Balck employed field fortifications in Lorraine that came as close to First World War battlefield conditions as anything the Americans had yet seen in France. In particular, Balck was lavish in his employment of minefields. Afterwards, Balck wrote, "From Army Group Level, I directed the layout of minefields. The minefields consisted of a few real mines and lots of dummy ones. Once you've forced the enemy to work his way slowly into a minefield, you know exactly where his point of main effort is. Then you can envelop him with your mobile reserves.

The Strategic Setting

With that tactic, I had great success against the Russians in Galicia, as well as against the Americans on the Western Front."

In addition to his forward defense line, Balck also had several fortified positions to fall back on should retirement become necessary. Among these was the West Wall (or "Siegfried Line" as it was known to the Allies), the French Maginot Line, the Orscholz "Switch" Line (an extension of the West Wall between the Moselle and the Sarr near Thionville), and the "West-Stellung" (a new fortified line near Sarrebourg ordered specifically by Balck in late September). All in all, Balck had extensive, although not truly formidable defenses at his disposal.¹

CHAPTER 3

THE TACTICAL SITUATION

A. Study of the Area of Operation.

(1) Climate and Weather.

On 25 September 1944 a cold front moved into the battle area from the North Sea and brought low ceilings, poor visibility, rain, and colder temperatures.¹ There was almost a continuous drenching, cold rain day after day. The mud was deep, slimy, and slippery. Great pools of water lay everywhere, and rivers rose above normal levels. Leather and clothing mildewed and metal rusted. There was a constant battle to keep equipment clean and usable. It was thoroughly miserable for everyone.²

After the weather turned cold, the soldier's feet began to freeze. Many soldiers developed trench foot. The combined effects of the weather and climate reduced the combat effectiveness of the soldier; the early morning ground fog prevented observation of enemy attacks.³ However, the ground fog usually burned off by late morning and enemy movements could be observed from defensive positions.

The Tactical Situation

The weather limited the ability of the Air Forces to support the battle. In early morning hours, the ground fog prevented air operations from effectively engaging targets even if their airfields allowed them to take-off. September 25 and 26 were poor weather days with little Air Force support due to low ceilings, poor visibility, and rain. September 27, 28, and 29 were excellent flying days after the morning ground fog dissipated. The rain was intermittent on these days. September 30 and October 1 were again bad weather days with very little Air Force support of the battle.⁴

There was no specific comment in the resource material on the mud and rain decreasing the tactical mobility of either side. However, most of the source documents were generated by the United States forces, which were predominantly infantry units defending from the high ground of the Forêt de Grémecey. These type units would not have suffered extensive reductions in mobility due to the weather. However, it is safe to assume that armored units operating in the river valleys to the north and south of the Forêt de Grémecey experienced some difficulty with the soft, wet ground.

The Tactical Situation

Again, as with the tactical mobility, no reference was made in the source material concerning troop morale. U.S. troop morale must have been high at the beginning of the battle due to the recent tactical victories in the Lorraine Campaign. The cold front and wet weather arriving in the battle area on 25 September 1944, along with the U.S. force assuming the defense, would have decreased the morale of the U.S. forces. German forces had very little reason for high morale. Their superior commanders had been relieved and replaced. Their units were woefully understrength in personnel and equipment. They had been pushed across France until they were on the doorsteps of Germany.⁵ Also they were probably less prepared for the weather in terms of personal equipment. Therefore, the troop morale of German forces must have been considerably lower than that of the U.S. forces.

(2) Terrain (OCOKA).

U.S. forces defended initially from the high ground along the wood line on the north, east, and south of the Forêt de Grémecey, and from the high ground to the south of the Seille River valley, which was just south of the Forêt de Grémecey.⁶ (See maps at Appendix A). From these positions,

The Tactical Situation

U.S. forces could observe any enemy movement from the east, north or south of their defensive positions. However, this observation was limited to 2000 meters, at most, due to terrain and vegetation. For example, north of the Forêt de Grémecey, at a distance of approximately 2000 meters, the hill masses were 40 to 50 meters higher than the terrain occupied by elements of the 35th Infantry Division. Any enemy movement to the north of these hill masses was not observable by the 35th Infantry Division. Similarly, on the northeast and east of the Forêt de Grémecey, the vegetation of the Forêt de Château - Salins and forest south of Coutures concealed enemy movements to within 600 to 2000 meters of the 35th Division's defensive positions. To the south, the terrain did not offer concealment to enemy movement along the Seille River valley except for those elements of the 35th Division defending from the high ground south of the Seille River. For these elements, the vegetation south of the village of Chambrey concealed enemy movement for a distance of approximately 1000 meters west of Chambrey.⁷

The same terrain and vegetation which concealed enemy movement from the 35th Division also concealed the movements and dispositions of the 35th Division from enemy

The Tactical Situation

observation. Therefore, surveillance over critical areas of the battlefield was limited initially to 600 to 2000 meters. The battle would later move into the Forêt de Grémecy, itself, where surveillance would be nonexistent and fighting at close quarters the rule.

The terrain influenced indirect fire weapons more than direct fire weapons, initially. The vegetation in the forested areas where U.S. forces and German forces defended or assembled, respectively, reduced observation and made it difficult to bring effective indirect fire on either side. Furthermore, the trees in these areas caused mortar and artillery fire to detonate in the tree tops. While this fire had effect on unprotected personnel, it was not as effective as timed fire on personnel in the open because the vegetation absorbed some of the shell fragments. Additionally, the limited distance between U.S. force and German forces reduced the time available to bring observed indirect fire on an attacking enemy. That is, an armored force could close on the defensive positions in the eastern portion of the Forêt de Grémecy before indirect fire could be effectively brought to bear on that force. Direct fire weapons were limited to less than their maximum effective

The Tactical Situation

ranges due to the limited distance between attacker and defender in this battle.

Since the areas with the shortest distance between U.S. forces and German forces were on the northeast, east and southeast of the Forêt de Grémecey, German forces focused their attacks in these areas. This afforded the German forces the least amount of exposure time to U.S. direct and indirect fire, as well as the much feared attacks by U.S. tactical aircraft. U.S. forces concentrated on occupying the terrain that would provide them with the best concealment from enemy observation, while providing them with the best possible observation of likely enemy avenues of approach. To accomplish this, the 35th Infantry Division occupied the edge of the Forêt de Grémecey with two regiments, and their front extended twelve miles in length; the Nancy - Nomény and Nancy - Château - Salins highways marking the left and right boundaries, respectively.⁸ At only two points did the front of the 35th Infantry Division not follow the edge of the Forêt de Grémecey. These points were Hill 282, south of Fresner-en-Saulnois, which offered the best observation of any attacks from the vicinity of the Forêt de Château-Salins to the northeast, and a position south of the Seille River, to provide a cohesive defense with the

The Tactical Situation

defensive positions of the 4th Armored Division, which occupied defensive positions south of the Nancy-Château-Salins highway.⁹

Obstacles on the battlefield which could impede or canalize the movement of the forces were both natural and man-made. The natural obstacles consisted of the Seille River to the south of the Forêt de Grémecey. This canalized movement to either the north or to the south of its east-west flow. The Osso Creek, to the north of the Forêt de Grémecey, also flowed east-west, but was not as formidable an obstacle as the Seille River. However, the wet conditions existing during this period could have limited the ability of armored forces to cross at other than selected crossing sites. A small tributary of the Seille River ran north-south approximately 500 meters east of the Forêt de Grémecey, but it appears that this obstacle did not impede movement to any large degree. The Seille River, to the west of the Forêt de Grémecey, was a formidable obstacle and could be crossed only at prepared crossing sites. This obstacle could have impeded any withdrawal by the 35th Infantry Division which defended well east of the river, as well as any attack by German forces from the east to the west. Furthermore, the Forêt de Grémecey itself was an

The Tactical Situation

obstacle to armored forces due to the density of the vegetation and the limited road network. The man-made obstacles consisted of the villages of Pettoncourt and Chambrey on the south of the forest, and the villages of Frenes-en-Saulnois, Jallaucourt, and Malamcourt-Sur-Seille to the north of the forest. Although these villages were small, any rubbing caused by artillery or aircraft attacks would have impeded movement through the villages and caused an attacking force to bypass.

The presence of these obstacles influenced the way the battle was fought for two reasons. First, the 35th Infantry Division defended the edge of the largest obstacle on the battlefield, the Forêt de Grémecey. Second, the obstacles of the river valleys influenced the avenues of approach that the German forces used by canalizing their attacking forces. Also, most of the German attacks into the Forêt de Grémecey were generally along the road networks.¹⁰

The 35th Infantry Division benefited from the presence of these obstacles because they canalized and hindered any enemy attacks. Moreover, any enemy armored attack was essentially road oriented once it was introduced onto the battlefield due to the river valleys, as well as the Forêt de Grémecey itself.

The Tactical Situation

The key terrain in the area of operation was the Forêt de Château-Salins, which was the dominant terrain in the area, and the Forêt de Grémecey. Both of these forests were on high ground which commanded the avenues of approach in their vicinity. Furthermore, they both offered excellent cover and concealment for forces defending or preparing to attack. Therefore, there was some advantage to each side as a result of their occupation of key terrain.

The German advantages to occupying the dominant key terrain of the Forêt de Château-Salins were the cover and concealment from enemy indirect fires and tactical aircraft and the ability to stage their attacks out of relatively safe assembly areas. Also, the distance that their attacking forces would have to travel in the unprotected open areas from the Forêt de Château-Salins to the Forêt de Grémecey was limited to approximately 2000 meters. Therefore, the exposure time of their attacking forces to direct and indirect fire and U.S. tactical aircraft was limited, and they could close with U.S. forces in the Forêt de Grémecey in a very short period of time.

The advantages to the 35th Infantry Division in occupying the key terrain of the Forêt de Grémecey were the control of all avenues of approach into the battlefield from

The Tactical Situation

the east, the cover and concealment afforded by the forest, and the securing of a bridgehead across the Seille River. The disadvantage was that in order to secure the Forêt de Grémecey, the division had to occupy the edge of the forest. This required an extension of their lines for approximately 12 miles.¹¹ This resulted in very thin defensive positions which could be easily exploited by the enemy.

The views of each level of command of the opposing forces concerning the selection of key terrain was not identifiable in the research material. However, the XII Corps Commander, MG Eddy, strongly believed that the Forêt de Grémecey was necessary for securing a firmer grip on the supply lines leading to the 4th Armored Division which was defending to the south of the 35th Infantry Division.¹²

To defend the Forêt de Grémecey, the 35th Infantry Division divided the forest into two regimental sectors. The boundary line generally followed the Fresnes-en-Saulnois to Grémecey road which divided the forest into almost equal halves. The 137th Infantry Regiment was assigned the right half of the division sector, while the 134th Infantry Regiment was assigned the left half. The 320th Infantry Regiment was assigned to the XII Corps reserve.¹³

The Tactical Situation

The best avenues of approach for the attacking force were: the northern half of the Seille River valley which was just south of the Forêt de Grémecey; the road from Courtures to Jallaucourt which ran through the middle of the forest from east to west; and the road from Fresnes-en-Saulnois to Grémecey which ran through the forest from northeast to southwest. These avenues of approach were selected and used by the German force and were big enough to accommodate the appropriate units because no more than two battalions attacked along a single avenue of approach during the entire battle.¹⁴

The avenues of approach provided the attacking force with favorable observation and fire, but no cover and concealment once they cleared the forested areas to the east of the Forêt de Grémecey. However, there was ample cover and concealment until the attacking force closed within 2000 meters of the Forêt de Grémecey. The avenues of approach avoided obstacles for the most part, except two of the avenues passed through the villages of Chambrey in the south and Fresnes-en-Saulnois in the northeast. The main avenue of approach, the Chambrey to Pettoncourt highway, kept the Seille River to its south.

The Tactical Situation

The avenues of approach utilized key terrain for assembly and staging areas, as well as the objectives of the attack. There was adequate maneuver space for the small forces of no more than two battalions of infantry that would use a single avenue of approach during an attack. The avenues of approach provided ease of movement to the attacking force up to the point of entering the Forêt de Grémecey. Inside the forest movement was restricted due to heavy vegetation and blown down trees.

The defending force could interfere with the attacking force's use of the avenues of approach by: engaging the attacking force with direct and indirect fires during the last 2000 meters of the attack; by employing mines and obstacles along the most likely avenues of approach; by using tactical aircraft to break up the attack formation; and by employing observation aircraft to observe and bring indirect fire to bear on the attack force before the last 2000 meters of the attack.

The combined effects of weather and terrain favored the attacking force at night, in the early morning and during bad weather. The advantages to the attacking force during these period of time were: concealment from observation by the defending forces, thereby limiting their effective use

The Tactical Situation

of direct and indirect fire; the defending force's inability to use tactical aircraft; and tactical surprise could only be achieved during these periods. Conversely, late mornings, afternoons, and good weather favored the defending force for the same reasons. That is, the defending force could observe the enemy movement and bring concentrated direct and indirect fire, as well as tactical aircraft, to bear on the attacking force's formation; thereby disrupting the attacker's momentum and command and control while inflicting heavy casualties upon him.

B. Comparison of Opposing Forces.

(1) Technology.

The technological level of the weaponry of the opposing forces was approximately equal. However, Germany had lost the air war and, as a result, her factories and cities were being constantly bombed by allied air forces. Therefore, Germany could not increase or maintain the production levels necessary to support the war in the east, west, and in Italy simultaneously. Consequently, there was a severe shortage of tactical aircraft, artillery pieces, and tanks. Furthermore,

The Tactical Situation

much of the above equipment had been lost during the German withdrawal from France.¹⁵

The U.S. M4 tank with its short barreled 75mm gun was outgunned by the Panther Mark V and was also less adequately protected by armor. The M4 was more mobile, though less maneuverable than the Panther. The M4's gyrostabilizer and power traverse, permitted greater flexibility and rapidity of fire than the German tanks.¹⁶ This gave the M4 the advantage at close quarters and the Panther the edge at extended ranges.

Many of the rounds fired by German artillery were duds. This was reported to be as high as 30 to 40 percent of the total rounds fired.¹⁷ Examination of shell fragments proved them to be of an inferior cast steel construction rather than forged steel.¹⁸ The American artillery was capable of massing the fires of many battalions to break up attacks, destroy assembly areas, or fire preparations for breakthroughs. The German artillery was rarely able to concentrate their guns as well as the Americans.¹⁹

The quality of aircraft was approximately equal. However, the Germans did not have sufficient quantities of aircraft to support their tactical doctrine. On only one occasion, 27 September 1944, were the German infantry

The Tactical Situation

attacks supported by aircraft. During this attack two ME109's strafed American positions with no resulting damage.²⁰ Thus, the Germans were not capable of using their doctrine of close air-ground coordination during the attack.

The Germans also lacked sufficient quantities of tanks to support their doctrine. They were never able to mass more than the equivalent of a single tank company in any attack against the Forêt de Grémecey.²¹ Thus, their main effort was always a diluted force when compared to earlier German attacks of the 1939 to 1940 period.

The American had sufficient technology to support their doctrine, as well as sufficient quantities. American air power was instrumental in breaking up attacking forces and destroying materiel not yet introduced into the battlefield.²²

Therefore, technology did affect the way the battle was fought. Since the Germans were deficient in air and armor and the Americans were superior in air power, the German attacks had to be initiated during period of limited visibility if they were to have any hope of succeeding.

The level of conflict and the environment permitted the unlimited use of sophisticated weaponry. However, since

The Tactical Situation

chemical weapons had not been used by either side during the war, they would not be used during this battle.

(2) Logistics.

Logistics shortages were the underlying reason for the Third Army to halt its offensive. Thus the battle of the Forêt de Grémecey was fought defensively by troops that were short of critically needed supplies, especially POL. Logistics shortages, Third Army-wide, had a direct effect on the 35th Division's battle in the Forêt de Grémecey. POL shortages limited the 137th and 134th Regiment's ability to respond to constant enemy pressure through defensive sectors that were wide, as well as densely forested. There is no indication that ammunition shortages hindered defensive operations. American artillery support continually beat back the enemy at critical points in the battle. POL shortages, however, became the key hinderence to the use of the main American strength - the ability to maneuver. The following excerpts from the After Action Report of the Third Army provide a general overview of the logistical situation:

The Tactical Situation

Additional evidence of frequent inability of enemy's supply organization to properly execute its function is found in US Army estimate of gasoline recently captured. Up to 16 Sep 44, Third US Army had captured and put to use 306,000 gals (1,020 tons) of enemy gasoline; up to 21 Sep 44, First US Army had captured and put to use 116,750 gals (389 tons) of enemy gasoline. These are recorded totals only, amount of unreported POL stocks overrun and put to use by front line units would probably raise these figures considerably. Bulk of this gasoline was captured in E and NE France in recent weeks of fighting when rapid advance of our forces had so disrupted enemy's supply system, that, far from being able to rescue his precious, sorely-needed stocks of POL, he was not even able to destroy them or otherwise make them unfit for use. Significance of this can best be appreciated when it is realized that most of the enemy's reserve stocks of POL for the use of armed forces in W were located in France and Low Countries, while in Germany only large stocks of POL were those currently being produced by oil plants, refineries, and synthetic fuel plants.²³

Operations of the Third U.S. Army as they developed during September underwent an abrupt change as the history-making pace of the Army's August advance was slowed, making necessary a type of warfare considerably different from that employed during the first thirty-one days of

The Tactical Situation

Continental action. At the beginning of the month it was apparent that, whatever the cause, an acute shortage of gasoline was seriously impairing the Army's mobility. Subsequently came other supply shortages, plus an enemy build-up and steadily worsening weather conditions. By the end of September Third U.S. Army had gone from an offensive to a defensive status...²⁴

Graves registration supplies were in a critical state, with 2,000 mattress covers and 3,000 personal effects bags needed. It was necessary to send trucks 300 miles to the beach to obtain these and other items. The gasoline situation again became uncertain, for receipts had been short since 17 September. One hundred thousand pounds of green coffee were received at Lerouville (U32), seven miles south of St. Mihiel (U43), and bakeries started to roast it at once.²⁵

Air movement of wounded provided a capability to ship critical supplies forward on short notice. Aircraft evacuating troops to the rear would fly back to forward areas loaded with essential supplies. As indicated below, vitally needed medical supplies came forward on aircraft. At times these aircraft did not complete their missions. "Air evacuation removed 600 patients to the United Kingdom during the period."²⁶

Four of a fleet of cargo planes carrying 20,000 blankets, 10,000 litters and 375 oxygen

The Tactical Situation

cylinders unfortunately overshot the airstrip at Etain (U47). One of the planes was shot down by the enemy and the other three were lost. As a result, Third U.S. Army hospitals received only 2,500 blankets, 1,000 litters and 100 oxygen cylinders.²⁷

On 22 September 1944 the [t]welfth U.S. Army Group advised that effective 25 September the minimum tonnage allocation to Third U.S. Army would be 3,500 tons.²⁸

On 23 September 1944 [a] combination of air evacuation and use of a hospital train resulted in the evacuation of more than 1,400 patients from the Third U.S. Army zone. The evacuation of 374 patients from the holding unit at Toul (U61) enabled that unit to reopen.²⁹

The logistical tonnage for the Third U.S. Army was further reduced on 24 September when [t]welfth U.S. Army Group advised that effective on 27 September the minimum tonnage allocation to the Third U.S. Army would be 3,100 tons daily.³⁰

This situation resulted in Letter of Instruction No. 4 being issued by the Third U.S. Army Commander on 25 September 1944. In part the order stated:

The Tactical Situation

1. The acute supply situation confronting us has caused the Supreme Commander to direct that until further orders, the Third Army, with its supporting troops, and those elements of the Ninth Army placed in the line, will assume the defensive.³¹

Further, in paragraph 4, the order read:

4. To provide the necessary means for such limited operations the utmost parsimony will be used in the expenditure of gasoline and ammunition consistent with the economy of the lives of our troops.³²

Although the availability of general supplies remained scarce, frontline troops did receive the bare essentials to maintain a limited level of warmth, comfort and protection, as the fighting progressed into cooler weather.

On 26 September [a] shipment of 221 long tons of Classes II and IV supplies, including 86,780 blankets, was received. All divisions were issued enough blankets to bring the total to three for each man and plans were made to complete the issues to corps and Army troops.³³

(3) Command and Control.

The Tactical Situation

American forces were fairly well organized for combat. The best organized and used combat multiplier was artillery. American's had the Fire Direction Center (FDC) capability to rapidly concentrate on German targets. This factor alone was a major contribution to the German propensity for use of concealment during movement and use of woods to stage forces in preparation for attack. Although more weather dependent, American air superiority weighed heavily in favor of the Third Army just prior to the Forêt de Grémecey battle. But by that time a shift to the north in priority, combined with poor visibility restricted control and even use of this asset. The Americans positioned infantry in restrictive terrain and maintained significant mobile reserves which could be used for exploitation, counterattack, or reinforcement. Armor forces were used in combat commands. The size of these forces was smaller than we think of in terms of large massed armor formations today. It is possible that opportunities were missed due to such a size force. The 35th Infantry Division, though organized in regiments, battalions and companies, failed to maintain meaningful integrity within commands. The constant attachment of companies and battalions from regiment to regiment reduced

The Tactical Situation

efficiency significantly and contributed to the confusion experienced by the soldiers. As result of such constant switches, liason efforts were poorest in the infantry units. This problem approached non-cooperation in some cases when flank units failed to provide expected support during attacks. This also tended to exacerbate the coordination problems faced by adjacent units considering the extended frontage the division occupied in the forest. This greatly assisted German efforts to probe for gaps and exploit through use of infiltration. There was a tendency for forces to occupy the high ground in order to retain long range visibility. This tended to cluster defenders in the woods where they had poor fields of fire and poor mutual support. To the credit of the 35th ID, however, the assignment of such a sector while the division was understrength must be considered unrealistic. The frontage was so extensive as to make German infiltration inevitable. The obvious impact on command and control of such enemy activity should have been recognized and dealt with more effectively. Staff supervision of execution of orders could have been improved as well. More experienced officers should have recognized (and some did, as evidenced by reports) that standards were not being maintained and security was lacking. American

The Tactical Situation

communications security, on the other hand, seemed to fare better than the German. American forces had constant indications of German intentions; some of this effort was aided by French freedom fighters, who saw to it that German use of land lines were intercepted and interrupted.

German command and control was severely hampered by several factors. As has been mentioned, the French Freedom fighters were a thorn in the side of the German efforts. The constant merry-go-round of change in command also had a detrimental effect. By far though, it was the frustrating lack of any form of significant combat multipliers available to the German commanders which restricted their efforts to employ forces. Additionally, it must be realized that by now reinforcements were nearly non-existent. The 106th Panzer Brigade could hardly be called a significant reinforcement when it was down to between 8 to 12 tanks. The 559th VG Division had no tank destroyers; they had only hand held launchers. The artillery employed in support of the 559th was a light unit of the 12th Paratroop Artillery Regiment which supported until Balck ordered a halt to the counterattack. Considering the absolute necessity to reinforce immediately with whatever reserves arrived, it

The Tactical Situation

would seem that German efforts at command and control of such piecemeal forces should be commended.

(4) Doctrine and Training.

German doctrine primarily evolved around the principle of "Blitzkrieg" or "Lightning War". This doctrine was always oriented toward offensive action, by establishing extended objectives, concentrating unity of effort, maintaining flexibility to employ their strengths against an enemy's weakness, and exploiting their successes. Additionally, they employed air power to interdict enemy rear and front line action to deteriorate the enemy's will to fight.³⁴

To implement this doctrine, a framework of basic tactics was developed. This framework consisted of three main elements:

a. Reconnaissance: This element was essential to all levels of command, but can be roughly divided into:

1. Operational Reconnaissance - long range observation of the enemy (usually by air) to predict movements, intentions, and support activities.

The Tactical Situation

2. Tactical Reconnaissance - usually conducted 15-20 minutes ahead of German Armies to protect against surprise and to report enemy locations and actions.

3. Battle Reconnaissance - close in reconnaissance, to identify, locate, and interdict enemy front line divisions to permit exploiting enemy weakness. (Battle Reconnaissance was considered the most important in the German Army).

b. Offensive: Only offensive actions could win wars. The ultimate goals and standards for German offensive operations was to hit the enemy on his flanks (attacks spearheaded by armored units supported by infantry) to encircle, disrupt, and destroy his forces. Offensive actions should achieve surprise, and must concentrate on local superiority in armor, air, and fire power at the critical point to support the main effort. The German Army offensive concept dictated a powerful and mobile reserve force to continue the attack and exploit success of the lead attacking elements. If a frontal attack (as compared to a flank attack) had to be initiated, concentration of elements to achieve local superiority, and a powerful reserve was

The Tactical Situation

mandated to achieve success via the German "Wedge and Cauldron" principle.

c. Defense: Defense was assumed to be needed only to hold ground or to pause long enough until a counterattack (offensive) could be launched. The German Army expertly controlled withdrawal operations to bide time in order to mass counterattacks. Units were standardized in training to permit their incorporation in other ad hoc units to meet specific mission needs. Ad hoc or task organized units could be created from Company to Division sized units. Hitler's influence and mandate on German defense can be summed up by saying - when a defense had to be established, the ground must be held to the last man, and counterattacks must be conducted (regardless of cost in assets) to halt enemy initiative.

In 1921, the U.S. Army accepted the Principles of War, which remain in effect to the present day. These principles seemed to be the driving factor in American operations of World War II. The seemingly most important principle of the day was that of offense. Considering the cooperation exhibited by the Allied forces, and in turn their

The Tactical Situation

disagreements, offensive operations was a common goal. The Allies and the Americans concluded, not unlike the Germans, that only offensive operations could defeat the enemy. To accomplish this offensive, and to guarantee uniformity and standardization of tactics, leaders seemed to stress "school book", unchanging formations and maneuver. This permitted success and "SOP" actions throughout the American force, but on the other hand, this inflexibility at times caused excessive losses because the enemy also read our "school books."³⁵

The offensive action of the U.S. forces can be described as a tactic of attrition and annihilation. Firepower to wear down and disrupt the enemy was critical to success.

American tactical objectives were limited and successive. Our forces exploited success only on a limited basis due to logistical problems. On several occasions our forces had to stop their momentum to permit the logistics to catch up. This permitted enemy forces to regroup and establish further positions.

The policy of U.S. air support, seemed to be concentrated on the disruption of the enemy rear areas, to interdict his resupply and reinforcement capabilities and

The Tactical Situation

his command and control system. Air superiority, even for limited periods, was essential for successful mission accomplishment. Rarely were U.S. air forces committed to close air support.

(5) Leadership.

At the very senior level of Allied Command, leaders tended to be overly cautious, thereby missing opportunities for success. Logistical planning did not take into account the possibility of success and therefore the buildup of supplies was inadequate to support an exploitation. This inefficient tendency carried over to the subordinate levels of command in the form of limited objective attacks. Eisenhower was at the cautious end of the spectrum, as were many of his staff. Patton was more ambitious; he was noted for his flamboyancy and quick decisions. In one instance, his quick decision to countermand a withdrawal order demonstrated his aggressive nature based on a good feel for the battle. There is some room for argument whether he could have been more successful had he concentrated armored forces more than he did. MG Eddy, Commander, XII Corps, had displayed adequate initiative and imagination while the Third U.S. Army was on the offensive, but was worried and

The Tactical Situation

ineffective while his corps was on the defense. MG Grow, Commander, 6th Armored Division, cannot be judged fairly by reviewing the records of the battle of Forêt de Grémecey. To his great credit, his subordinate combat commands performed admirably and he had the foresight to anticipate future missions and make preparations for their execution. However, during this particular battle, his forces were committed as combat commands in concert with the 35th ID on the last day of the fight. MG Baade, Commander, 35th Infantry Division, had done a good job of bringing his activated National Guard division across France. Although traditionally Americans were poorly trained and ill-prepared for combat, emphasis on pre-deployment training made a significant difference while on the offensive. However, the loss in proficiency in the conduct of defense during the division's long offensive march across France and the loss of experienced troops to casualties produced significant problems in the first deliberate defense conducted by the 35th Infantry Division. Training for the defense logically would have been devoted to normal frontages; this was not the situation presented in the forest east of Grémecey. Leaders failed either because they did not know better or because they did not enforce standards; the principle reason is not really clear. On the

The Tactical Situation

whole though, Americans traditionally will follow a good leader to the ends of the earth at any odds; small unit leaders became heroes, generals like Patton were gods. Sometimes the innovativeness and flexibility typical of American leadership worked to a slight disadvantage. Troops were given many changes to orders resulting in unnecessary waste of energy in movement and added to the lack of firm understanding of what was going on. This last item was a notable fault of our leadership - the troops were not kept well informed. The impact of rapid reporting and articles in the Stars and Stripes proclaiming a near-end to the war did not aid the situation and compounded the efforts in patrolling. Why risk being aggressive on patrols or during attacks/counterattacks when a man thought of staying safe to go home? This problem affected the well trained, more senior, of the small unit non-commissioned officer corps, as well as the rapidly promoted junior enlisted soldiers who were less experienced. Personnel ceilings had forced combat service support MOS soldiers into infantry units as line replacements with little training. This left the remaining qualified enlisted men to be promoted to fire team leaders and squad leaders. Junior officers had to be the ones to enforce standards in many cases. It is to their credit that

The Tactical Situation

so many small unit actions were taken to defeat German infiltration in the forest.

Hitler's constant demand for successful counterattacks to defeat the Allied forces north of the Marne-Rhine Canal and the reoccupation of Nancy was unrealistic. Totally inadequate forces were available to do the job. Yet to his credit, had the Germans not made an attempt to blunt Patton's Third Army, the Allies may have been tempted to take a different course of action in the south, other than strategic defense. At OB WEST Von Rundstedt was a solid planner and could rapidly manage changes in situations and large forces. Balck, as of 21 September the commander of Army Group G, was much less creative than Guderian had been in the north. Although at times he correctly husbanded armor forces, for the most part they were dispersed and ineffective. To his credit, he saw to it that counterattacks were made; but the reinforcements he allocated were insufficient and were transferred piecemeal. General Preiss, commander, XIII SS Corps, was very aggressive and went so far as to continue attacks in disregard of orders to the contrary. There were other significant differences at division level from that of the Americans.

The Tactical Situation

While the Americans had superior combat support by this stage of the war, and used it effectively, the German divisions were not so well off. Their commanders did not have access to significant reserves, adequate artillery, or tanks. The Volksgrenadier divisions were made up of units which had been all but obliterated on the Russian Front. They were infused with the youngest category of mobilization troops who were given mediocre training. Some replacements came from NCO academies, which at one time were well run, but by now the demand for bodies had become stronger than the demand for quality. However, the corps of noncommissioned and commissioned officers who had gained experience in other theaters formed a strong nucleus. In the final analysis failures on the part of the 559th and earlier the 553rd Volksgrenadier Divisions was due more to personnel and equipment shortages than inadequacies in leadership. In the case of the 553rd, there is some discrepancy as to whether they were ordered to withdraw from the terrain east of Nancy or whether the withdrawal to the north, which opened the dangerous gap between two German armies was ordered by the corps commander. The 553rd lost two thirds of its remaining infantry when they resisted until the last moment when the XII U.S. Corps attacked north of the forest

The Tactical Situation

in early October to eliminate the Forêt de Grémecey salient. The 559th VG Division was committed piecemeal with three other elements to counterattack the Forêt de Grémecey. This was not an error in leadership, but simply a matter of necessity. There were few other reserves available; the Allies had continuously cut rail lines which hampered transfer of what forces could be gathered up, and it was imperative to block the gap and restore contact between the German 1 AOK and 5th Panzer Army. The Germans displayed admirable leadership qualities as evidenced by well dug defenses, constant counterattacks in the face of superior forces, execution of the difficult tactic of infiltration, and success of small groups of forces to defend critical villages and road networks.

With the significant exception of Patton's attack order on 30 September, and considering the strengths and weaknesses on both sides, leadership was not the determining factor in the battle of Forêt de Grémecey.

C. Military Objectives of Each Antagonist.

(1) Allied Objectives.

The Tactical Situation

In early September the Allied Western European strategy was to attack northward from the Seine, primarily because the bulk of the German Army was oriented toward that region. Other major reasons for this attack included the allies need for the port of Antwerp, which was absolutely essential logistically before any deep penetration could be made into Germany, and the need for airfields in Belgium. General Eisenhower also felt that the lower Rhine offered the best avenue of advance into Germany.

Along with this main effort in the north, was the plan to push eastward to link up with the French and American forces advancing from the south. In addition, a drive along the Verdun - Metz axis would enhance the opportunity for surprise and maneuver, which would require the enemy to extend his forces and remain in doubt as to the direction of the Allied main thrust.

The main Allied offensive effort was to be carried out by the 21st Army Group. Patton's 3rd Army, of the 12th Army Group, was to make a supporting attack in the south. Third Army operations in Lorraine began in September 1944 with the initial plan of occupying Lorraine, penetration of the West Wall, and crossing of the Rhine in a continuous rapid operation. This plan was delayed because of adverse weather,

The Tactical Situation

logistical problems, and an unexpected enemy main defensive effort.

(2) German Objectives.

In early September Hitler ordered Field Marshall Model, Commander-in-Chief West, that the German Armies must stand and hold in front of the West Wall to gain time needed for rearming the West Wall defenses. This line ran from the Dutch coast through northern Belgium, along the forward positions of the West Wall segment between Aachen and the Moselle River. Defense along this line was to achieve many important results, to include keeping Allied air bases as far as possible from Germany and denying the Allies the use of the port of Antwerp.

During his estimate of the situation, Model correctly estimated the Allied troop strength and air power. He also assessed the German strength and composition as extremely poor and rapidly worsening. He reported that eleven Panzer Divisions would have to be totally refitted before they could equal the Allied ground strength. He immediately requested 25 infantry divisions, 5 panzer divisions, and

The Tactical Situation

sufficient artillery to accomplish his defensive mission. All requests were denied.

Shortly afterward Model was relieved and replaced as Commander-in-Chief West by Field Marshall Rundstedt. Rundstedt received orders from Hitler to hold the previously mentioned defensive line and to take the offensive in the Nancy-Neufchâteau sector by counterattacking towards Reims.

Shortly afterward (7 September), Rundstedt developed his estimate of the situation. He estimated the Allied strength in the west to be fifty-four divisions with thirty additional divisions in England. He assessed the German forces as weak and depressed. He immediately requested ten infantry divisions and five panzer divisions with heavy fire support and heavy anti-tank weapons. His request was denied and Hitler reiterated that the counterattack against the southern flank of the American Third Army must be made.

The mission of the XIII SS Armee Korps was to mop up the area of the Château-Salines, and then to attack through the Forêt de Grémecey in conjunction with the Fifth Panzer Army.

The German initial objective was to capture the village of Moncel, on the Nancy-Dieuze highway, then punch a hole in the 35th Division line through which the Fifth Panzer Army

The Tactical Situation

could exploit toward Nancy. The 559th Division and the 106th Panzer Brigade were to lead the attack from the currently held Forêt de Château-Salines, which was the dominant ground located approximately two thousand yards northeast of Forêt de Grémecey.

D. Feasible Courses of Action.

(1) Allies.

The only feasible course of action, tactically, for U.S. forces was to defend due to logistical constraints mentioned earlier.

(2) German.

Balck's elastic mobile defense tactics were the German's only feasible course of action because of their severely depleted strength. Hitler's intervention by ordering the attack precluded following that course of action.

CHAPTER 4

THE BATTLE: 26 Sep - 1 Oct 1944

A. The Action.

On 20 September 1944, the Third US Army's XII Corps, commanded by Major General Eddy, had achieved success and had developed a salient in the German defense east of the key town of Nancy. The composition of the XII Corps' maneuver elements at this time was as follows:

4th Armored Division - MG Wood, Commander
6th Armored Division - MG Grow, Commander
35th Infantry Division - MG Baade, Commander
80th Infantry Division - MG McBride, Commander
320th Infantry Regiment - COL Bryne, Commander
(Corps Reserve)¹

The aforementioned salient was achieved by the efforts of the 4th Armored Division (with the 320th Infantry Regiment attached), but as a result of the division's success, it's southern flank became exposed and unprotected.

The Battle

In light of the above situation, the Third U.S. Army Commander, General Patton, decided to establish a new boundary between his XII and XV Corps, which provided some protection for the southern flank of the 4th Armored Division and its established salient.

But in addition, the XII Corps commander was anxious to secure a firmer grip on the supply lines leading to the 4th Armored and suggested to Patton that the Forêt de Grémecey, commanding the main highway east of Nancy, should be occupied.²

Accordingly, XII Corps planned to continue the attack to the west of Nancy on 22 September 1944, which was to be spearheaded by the 6th Armored Division. The attack was launched on schedule and the 6th Armored Division attacked west from Ajoncourt and drove the enemy into the awaiting 80th Infantry Division. Simultaneously, the 35th Infantry Division advanced and made contact with both the 6th Armored Division and the 80th Infantry Division to join the fight. This action readily achieved the Corps objective, which was to occupy the Forêt de Grémecey.³ The 6th Armored Division was in the midst of preparing to continue the attack to the

The Battle

north when word was received that Third Army was to halt offensive operations and defend in sector.⁴

At 2000 hrs, 23 September, General Patton held a press conference; at which time he was asked:

Question: [When was the Third Army going to start moving again?] Patton: [Not] till we get supplies... There is no point in making a slow advance and you can't make a rapid advance because we haven't got the stuff right now. We can fight hard for five days and then we've got to throw rocks.⁵

It was not until 25 September 1944 that the Official Order came to the Third Army from the Twelfth Army Group; the order was simple but explicit: "Third Army: Hold present position until supply situation permits resumption of the offensive."⁶

General Patton responded, and on the same date issued an order to his Corps' and Tactical Air Commander's stating,

The acute supply situation confronting us has caused the Supreme Commander to direct that until

The Battle

further orders, the Third Army, with its supporting troops...will assume the defensive.⁷

On 25 September 1944 (and continuing through 26 September) the XII Corps ordered the 35th Division to relieve both MG Grow's troops of the 6th Armored Division in the Forêt de Grémecey sector and the Combat Command B (CCB) of the 4th Armored Division which had been holding a blocking position in the vicinity of the town of Fresnes. With the Third US Army now on the defensive, the 35th Division settled down to defend its assigned twelve mile front. The front stretched between the Nancy-Nomeny and the Nancy-Château highways, which marked the Division's left and right boundaries, respectively.⁸

The American players were in place to face the contest of the Forêt de Grémecey.

By 10 September 1944, the German First Army, commanded by General Von Knobelsdorff, which opposed Patton's Third Army, had successfully escaped across France (under pressure of the Allied advance following the Normandy Landings) to establish a hasty but effective defense behind the Sauer and Mosel Rivers with bridgeheads near Metz and Nancy.⁹

The Battle

On 14 and 15 September, the Allies continued their attack and broke through the north wing of the First Army, near Wallendorf, and widened their bridgeheads significantly to threaten the Mosel Gate from the North. In the south the American 4th Armored and 35th Infantry Divisions, forced across the Mosel south of Metz.

On 17 September, the Germans counterattacked in their northern sector (which was considered the most critical area) and successfully pushed the invaders back, so that by 21 September the West Wall was once more in German hands.¹⁰ Conversely on the southern flank, the German First Army's XIII SS Corps sector, commanded by LTG Priess, had no forces available to commit to an attack considering the Army's priority to the northern flank, and therefore the salient created by the American 4th Armored Division remained untouched. Furthermore, on 22 September, the Americans continued their attack east in sector and successfully occupied the Forêt de Grémecey.

By 24 September, and after reorganization and reinforcement, the XIII SS Corps had the following forces available in the vicinity of the American salient:

559th Volksgrenadier Division

The Battle

59th Regiment, 19th Volksgrenadier Division (attached
to the 559th Volksgrenadier Division.

106th Panzer Brigade¹¹

However, it should be noted that:

1. The VG Divisions ...were initially organized in the summer of 1944. Their personnel [were] in good shape, only their mobility was limited. Their equipment in artillery, anti-tank weapons, [and] particularly....signal equipment was meager...they had no assault guns.¹² Although, "one company of tank destroyers replaced the conventional assault gun battalions as anti-tank defense."¹³ Additionally, "the infantry formations were... relatively untried units; both were somewhat under regulation strength. [Although,] the officers and noncoms were young, [they were] able veterans of the Eastern Front."¹⁴

2. The 106th Panzer Brigade "had been re-equipped but did not yet have a full tank compliment."¹⁵ In fact, the 106th Panzer Brigade had "only... eight [8] tanks."¹⁶

3. "The artillery regiment of the 559th VG Division was at [somewhat] average strength, with two light battalions and one medium."¹⁷

The Battle

The stage was set; the opposing forces were in place; the Battle of the Forêt de Grémecey ensued.

General Von Knobelsdorff, in support of a coordinated Army Group counteroffensive to regain Nancy, ordered LTG Priess, XIII SS Corps, to commit all of his available forces to a resumption of the attack on 27 September. Priess selected the village of Moncel, on the Nancy-Dievze highway, as the initial objective; the apparent intent was to punch through the American 35th Division in order to pass the German Fifth Army through to recapture the town of Nancy and secure its vital lines of communication.¹⁸

As previously stated, the 35th Division occupied a front of about twelve miles.

"The larger part of this front (some eight miles) outlines a salient or bridgehead north and east of the Seille River. The apex of this salient was formed by the Forêt de Grémecey. Following the edge of the forest, the American line bent sharply (almost a right angle) in the northeast corner of the woods. This is the situation which the Germans would attempt to exploit."¹⁹

The Battle

This angle in the forest lay approximately two thousand meters from the Forêt de Château-Salins which was occupied by the Germans. The German position was advantageous; they held the dominant terrain in the area which permitted concealment for their troop movements.

The 35th Division forces were displaced in sector having the 134th Infantry Regiment on the left and the 137th Infantry Regiment on the right. The 320th Infantry Regiment was assigned the mission of the Division reserve.²⁰ *See page 10*
Additionally, the following organizations were provided to support the 35th Infantry Division:

448th AAA Battalion

654th TD Battalion

737th Tank Battalion

3905th Truck Company

3rd Platoon, 60th Field Hospital²¹

The Battle History of the 137th Infantry records the opening activities of the battle:

All was quiet along the entire Corps front until noon September 26, except for a small counterattack on the 4th Armored Division at Marsal.

The Battle

Early in the afternoon of the 26th the 3rd Battalion began to receive artillery shelling in their area, and increased activity was observed in Chambrey. At 1800 a small German force attacked through the Chambrey Woods, from the direction of Coutures, but were driven back during the night.

The 4th Armored Division located 33 tanks and 400 men in the vicinity of Juvelize and Lezey, but no further activity was reported during the day.

There were some casualties in the 3rd Battalion [137th Infantry] on the 26th, as 2 men were killed, 6 wounded and 6 missing.²²

That same day, 26 september, the 134th Infantry Regiment recorded:

First indication that this was not to be an unchallenged defensive came with the 1st Battalions withdrawal to the regimental reserve...It was 1615 when the enemy opened fire. One point of difficulty was an American tank which the Germans had captured. A platoon of Company B was given the task of recapturing the tank. As the

The Battle

leading squad worked through the street a shell from a tank burst near and killed PFC Charles A. Catenazzo. Other members of the platoon moved on, but as they reached the vicinity of the tank, Germans closed in on them. A few darted into quick hiding - one practically beneath the tank - but the Nazis were able to get the others and their leader.²³

On the 26th, due to weather conditions, US Third Army's XIX Tactical Air Command had limited air activities. This hindered not only tactical air support actions, but it also limited the Army's air reconnaissance capabilities. It was reported that, "In thirty-five sorties [flown], claims included four motor transports damaged or destroyed and three military installations attacked."²⁴

During the night of 26-27 September, the 134th Infantry Regiment dispatched patrols; their reports substantiated enemy activity and concentration in front of the 35th Division to suggest a forthcoming attack. The 35th Division grimly awaited the attack, which was certain to come.²⁵

It was approximately 0700 hrs in the morning on 27 September, Nazi artillery fire increased, and the Luftwaffe

The Battle

began hitting the 35th Division.²⁶ The 559th VG Division and the 106th Panzer Brigade had officially commenced their attacks. Although, due to insufficient operational timing, these attacks were not totally synchronized. In fact, the German units were committed piecemeal, failing to mass their forces. This coupled with the shortage of German communication equipment caused the attack to be less efficient.

The attack was lead by the 2nd Battalion, 127th Regiment, 559th VG Division, travelling down the Chambrey-Pettoncourt road. This specific unforeseen action took the American defenders of the 137th Infantry Regiment totally by surprise.²⁷ The German tank and infantry attack succeeded in overrunning a roadblock, capturing four anti-tank guns, and permitted the force to come into direct fire range of Pettoncourt, thus threatening American supply routes crossing the Seille River. Assisting in the defense of the area, two companies of the 2nd Battalion, 137th Infantry, were committed to reinforce the 1st Battalion. The Germans continued moving tanks eastward from their positions in Chambrey and their advance pushed to the edge of Pettoncourt. By 1030 hrs, the 35th Division commander, MG Baade, realizing the seriousness of the situation, committed

The Battle

the 1st Battalion, 320th Infantry (the division reserve) along with C Company, 737th Tank Battalion to attachment under the 137th Infantry, to bolster its defenses in the penetration area.²⁸

During this action the 35th Division records indicate specific heroic actions of the men of the 448th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion:

The versatility of the American soldier was displayed by men of Gun Section No. 4 of the 448th Anti-Aircraft artillery Battalion. Stationed on the outskirts of Pettoncourt, they saw a file of Germans descending a nearby slope. Losing no time in changing from their primary mission of anti-aircraft defense to ground defense, they poured 11 rounds of high explosive 40mm into the file. Eight of the enemy were killed and the complete formation dispersed. In this manner a probable surprise attack on the Division flank was averted.²⁹

By 1130 hrs, the 1st Battalion, 137th Infantry, reinforced as addressed above, stopped the German advance to Pettoncourt. By 1330 hrs, the 1st Battalion cleared Pettoncourt and the roads leading to it and had been able to restore their original positions which were lost earlier in

The Battle

the day.³⁰ Upon their success, the 137th Infantry reported the following:

The German's suffered heavy casualties in attempting their mission of capturing Pettoncourt, and most of their officers had become casualties. In repulsing the attack, 1st battalion captured 24 prisoners.³¹

In the 3rd Battalion, 137th Infantry sector (also on 27 September):

... enemy tank activity increased during the morning, and shortly before noon aerial observers located a concentration of infantry on halftracks and fifteen tanks a mile east of Grémecey. An additional ten tanks were spotted a short distance to the southeast of the first group, and two platoons of our tank destroyers moved east out of Grémecey to go into action. Within twenty minutes they had knocked out two of the enemy tanks.

To the north of Grémecey, tanks were reported in the woods during the afternoon, and were targets for our Cannon Company. One tank moved to within 200 yards of the 3rd Battalion Command Post before being blasted out by a tank destroyer. At 1800 a German force was observed approaching

The Battle

Fresnes, and an hour later Company K was driven from their outpost in that town.³²

Within the 137th sector, enemy activities had ceased as evening approached. The regiment regained its ground after being initially expelled, but in doing so suffered 52 casualties (6 killed, 45 wounded, 1 missing). The Germans lost many more killed and wounded (actual figures are not available), and 71 of their soldiers were taken prisoner.³³

Although the main German effort was against the 137th Infantry on 27 September 1944, the 137th's sister regiment in the division, the 134th Infantry Regiment, did not go unscathed. Activities of the 134th Infantry are best described by their own detailed Combat History:

At 0730 enemy infantry, accompanied by two tanks, were reported to be moving south from Oriocourt. Hardly 15 minutes later, strong elements of the German 1120th Infantry, with tank support, had moved through the center of the 134th Infantry's main line of resistance to seize Manhoue. The threat had to be met quickly, and the decision was for Company B to move around to the left to support Company F in counterattack to repel the enemy from the position. That this was a part of the German plan which was seeking to pinch

The Battle

off the whole 35th Division's area was suggested when reports announced a strong attack against the right of the 137th Infantry; in fact, enemy tanks and infantry had broken through the road block at Chambrey and proceeded all the way to Pettoncourt, where, at 0800, they were being engaged by the 137th Infantry's Service Company! This meant that the enemy's spearheads, having effected a penetration amounting to nearly 3,000 yards in the 134th's section, and 5,000 yards in the 137th's, now were no more than 8,000 yards apart, and their junction would mean the surrounding of the bulk of those two regiments. In order to get the regimental reserve up to position where it would be in a position to block any further penetration, and, at the same time, to provide greater security for the installations of the command post, the 1st Battalion was moved up to Aboncourt (half mile south of enemy-held Manhoue) and the C.P. displaced from that location back to Alincourt. As this was being done, the report came at 0920 that the 137th Infantry had lost Pettoncourt. The enemy's strength, however, was not sufficient to conquer the defenses which had been organized behind it, and soon his effort was about spent as far as further offensive action was concerned. Happily for the darkening picture, troops of the 137th were able to retake Pettoncourt very quickly after its loss, and that alleviated a dangerous threat to the rear.

The Battle

Soon Company F's efforts - with the support of Company B - were showing results toward Manhoue. But as the company entered the town it found itself up against close range street fighting. By 1340, nevertheless, it was in possession of Manhoue; two German tanks had been knocked out there.

It still was obvious, however, that the enemy had not given up his designs upon the Forêt de Grémecey and the adjacent area. Shortly after noon the 3rd battalion outpost (a reinforced platoon of Company I), reported that a German company had moved into its rear, and tanks had appeared on its flank; it was ordered to withdraw, and was able to make its way back to the battalion reserve area. German troops continued to move into Jallaucourt during much of the afternoon.

Company F had to beat off some local attacks against Manhoue in order to hold it, but no further major attack developed that afternoon. However, it seemed evident that one was forming, and steps were taken to strengthen that Regiment's position. The remainder of the 1st Battalion (less Company A held as regimental reserve), moved up to join Company B, so that now all three battalions were in line. 3rd, 1st, 2nd, right to left. Corps and Division artillery was to continue fire on such points of enemy concentration as Fossieux, Malaucourt, Jallaucourt, and LaJuree woods. In an order reminiscent of California days, it was directed that there would be a 'stand-to' - during

The Battle

which every officer and enlisted man was to be alert - until an hour after darkness in the evening, and from 0530 to 0730 in the morning. Companies were to establish listening posts to the front with wire (usually sound power telephones) communication. Companies were to report hourly during the night.³⁴

The 27th of September had brought a clearing in the weather and therefore the XIX Tactical Air Command could effectively influence the days battle action. The Command flew a total of 517 sorties in 39 missions, having good results.

Among claims for the day were twenty-six railroad lines cut, and 180 railroad cars, forty-five motor transports, thirty-eight locomotives, five supply dumps, twenty-two gun installations, twelve military installations, nineteen tanks and armored vehicles damages or destroyed, while troop concentrations and marshalling yards were attacked with good results reported.^{#35}

The evening of 27 September did not contain further major German offensive action. Although, throughout the evening and into the next morning the 35th Division was

The Battle

subject to constant German patrolling efforts. These patrols probed the entire Division's front with the apparent mission to seek a soft/weak spot in the line for a possible renewed attack. Simultaneously the 35th Division dispatched its own patrols to seek-out the enemy strength and intentions. The Divisions patrols reported back:

By daylight, it was learned that in addition to the concentrations of infantry north of the 137th area, the Germans had moved up heavy armor in large numbers.³⁶

On 28 September the 137th Infantry Regiment became decisively engaged throughout its sector. Enemy patrolling and infiltration proved to be tactics that kept the Americans off-balance and constantly reacting to unanticipated threats to their lines. As indicated below the Germans devised a competent battle plan even though their personnel lacked the training and material resources to be effective. The Americans, accustomed to maneuver warfare, were now heavily committed to a static defensive battle over a relatively wide sector with limited POL and thus limited ability to grasp the initiative through maneuver.

The Battle

On 28 September German attacks hit all along the 35th Division front as more of Muehlen's infantry arrived in the sector. The bulk of the 559th Volksgrenader Division was thrown against the 137th infantry in a concentric assault from the east and north. Again the Germans reached Pettoncourt with a thrust from the east, and again they were stopped by the American artillery and infantry.³⁷

German patrolling constantly harassed the Americans and frequently found American lines weakly held. Information on American weaknesses would pass up the chain of command rapidly. The German seized every opportunity to conduct local attacks and counterattacks on weakly defended areas of the American sector. American patrols obtained important information.

During the night and into the early hours of the morning there was constant patrol action by the enemy, probing at lines and seeking to find a soft spot in them. The Division had its own patrols out also slithering through the darkness, seeking the enemy's strength. By day-light, it was learned that in addition to the concentrations of

The Battle

infantry north of the 137th area, the Germans had moved up heavy armor in large numbers.³⁸

The enemy armor found by the American patrols on the night of 27 September engaged the 137th Infantry throughout its sector on 28 September, coming from the east. During the 28th of September:

...the 137th Infantry (with the 1st Battalion 320th Infantry and Co C 737th Tank Battalion attached) was successful in repelling enemy armor, supported by infantry, in attempts to penetrate from the east to Pattencourt and Grémecey and from the northeast into the woods.³⁹

German patrolling, as before, complemented its infantry/armor attacks by again continuously seeking open areas in the American lines.

Enemy patrols...active during the early morning hours of September 28, ... had made contact with a 1st Battalion patrol, and as daylight approached the enemy activities increased. Co C detected considerable motor movement in and around Chambrey, with tanks leaving the town and heading west and northwest. Co C also reported small arms fire to their left,

The Battle

and Co B reported machine gun fire about 700 yards to their right...front.⁴⁰

The Germans were taking the initiative while the Americans, still suffering from limited logistical resources and orders to defend, had to hold in place. The Germans applied what pressure they could throughout the 35th ID front. The 134th Infantry experienced less intensive action than the 137th but nevertheless became engaged constantly. Often American artillery support was used to relieve intense enemy pressure on a unit.

The 559th VG Division also struck at the western flank of the 35th Division during 28 September - with little success. In the early morning the 3rd Battalion outposts of the 134th Infantry saw troops and tanks gathering for the attack in Jallaucourt, a village some thirteen hundred yards north of the forest. Before the Germans could do more than start their armored spearhead toward the wood line the American gunners were on target and broke the attack. Then eleven American field artillery battalions sent the village up in flames with TOT and the surviving enemy fled northeast.

Over the extreme left flank of the 134th Infantry, where the 2nd Battalion formed a link

The Battle

with the armored infantry of the 6th Armored Division deployed on the west bank of the Seille River, the enemy made a few minor attacks which were easily repelled. Actually, this sector of the 35th Division line never was seriously threatened. The enemy force opposite consisted of only a battalion of the weakened 553rd VG Division which had been gathered at Han, opposite Manhoué, to contain the American left flank while General Priess directed the main effort by Muehlen's 559th against the American right and center.⁴¹

German patrolling proved to be a sign to the 134th soldiers that aggressive activity was forthcoming.

German patrols were active again during the night. About midnight one the size of a squad walked by an L Company local outpost (on the 3rd Battalion's left). Shortly after, a listening post reported that there was an enemy patrol down near a blown-out bridge on the creek in front of the forest. But the climax in German audacity came when a five-man patrol made its way into the L Company area and pulled a man out [of] his foxhole and took him prisoner. Another patrol attempted to infiltrate through the left of the 2nd Battalion; one of the enemy threw a hand grenade at a gun position, but a burst of fire broke up that patrol. All companies, and the Regimental O.P.,

The Battle

were reporting vehicular movement, tanks, loud talking, flares. At 0400 there was heavy shelling in the area of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. Before 0600 such concentrations of German troops were approaching that both Companies K and L were calling for pre-arranged artillery fires.⁴²

The 137th continued to observe enemy foot and motor activity that eventually resulted in confirmation of a strong approaching force. American reaction to enemy patrolling and motor movement was slow. With strong indications of enemy strength concentrated in a certain area there was little action by friendly ground troops to counterattack.

By 0600 the Regiment was receiving artillery fire all along its front, and at 0640 the 134th Infantry was attacked by five enemy tanks into their 3rd Battalion area.⁴³

Armor engaged the 137th near Fresnes and Gallencourt also.

Tanks and infantry were reported north of the 137th area moving from the vicinity of Fresnes and Gallencourt, and by 0900 it was apparent that the

The Battle

enemy armor was in great strength and included heavy tanks. Our tank destroyers knocked out one tank in the 3rd Battalion area at 1045, after first losing one of their own TD's.⁴⁴

Enemy action continued through to midday with constant German patrolling.

By noon a strong German patrol had infiltrated behind the Command Post of the 3rd Battalion of the 137th and captured the Battalion motor pool. With the Command Post and the right flank of the battalion endangered, the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Albert M. Butler, Hastings, Nebraska, committed his headquarters and all available men. Company F and one platoon of tanks were sent to relieve the precarious condition.

Enemy tanks continued to move into the 3rd Battalion area, but between 1000 and 1300, Company B of the 654 Tank Destroyer Battalion had knocked out five tanks, three of them Tigers, and one self-propelled gun. Enemy patrols had again infiltrated into the area and the battalion wire team was attacked by German with bazookas.⁴⁵

At 1440 enemy patrols again infiltrated into the area, and the 3rd Battalion wire team was attacked by German armed with bazookas.⁴⁶

The Battle

American airpower proved to be a decisive tool that continued to thwart German attempts to consolidate their gains. Throughout this portion of the battle, American artillery and, when the weather permitted, air power, influenced the battle of the Forêt de Grémecey more often than did American ground units. Dependency on these two supporting arms seemed to grow as the defensive battle lengthened.

Late in the afternoon, with reports of enemy tanks mounting the Air Corps was called upon to strike at Chambrey and west of Coutures, known to be concentration points of enemy armored forces. Fighter-bombers bombed and strafed these points heavily and also attacked Jallaucourt, to the northwest.⁴⁷

The G-3 of the 35th Division felt that the situation facing the 137th was serious enough to commit some of its reserves to that regiment.

TELEPHONE MSG FROM 35 INF DIV 1700:

THE 320 INF PLUS ATTACHED TANK CO AND TD
COMPANY MOVED TO CORNER OF WOODS NW OF GREMECEY

The Battle

(SW CORNER OF BIG WOODS) TO TAKE UP A POSITION OF READINESS. THE SITUATION NE OF GREMECEY IS CRITICAL DUE TO INFILTRATION OF LARGE BODIES OF GERMAN TROOPS. SOME ESTIMATES PLACE THIS NUMBER AS HIGH AS 1500. THERE IS NO CONFIRMATION.⁴⁸

German infiltration, even in large numbers was successful because of the large sectors occupied by each American unit, the relative lack of good observation or conversely the availability to the Germans of good cover and concealment. Lack of attentiveness by the American also contributed to the German success at infiltration.

German infiltration caused disruption to American rear elements and isolated key terrain features. The Germans continued to cause the Americans to assume a reactive posture. Vital defensive lessons were not grasped by the Americans. Germans patrolling, infiltrating, and combined arms assaults surfaced as common German tactics. The American response to these tactics was to use heavy concentrations of artillery and air strikes. American tank destroying capability and defensive fighting ability required vast improvement.

...the 137th Infantry (with the 1st Battalion 320th Infantry and Co C of the 737th Tank

The Battle

Battalion attached) discovered that enemy penetrations had been accomplished in the woods northeast of Grémecey. A considerable number of the enemy infiltrated into the rear of the 3rd Battalion. The 1st Battalion 320th Infantry reinforced the position of the 3rd Battalion 137th Infantry. The enemy continued to reinforce his gains and the 3rd Battalion 137th Infantry was committed to hold Hill 282 and clean up the enemy groups to the rear. The enemy pressure forced the 1st Battalion 320th Infantry to withdraw about 1000 yards. A counter-attack by Co C 737th Tank Battalion accompanied by the Infantry, restored the position and drove the enemy from the rear of the 1st Battalion 320th Infantry. All troops were in contact and reorganized by nightfall.⁴⁹

The afternoon of the 28th proved no less strenuous to the 35th Infantry Division.

During the afternoon of 28 September 1944 there was firing by the organic and reinforcing artillery units of the 35th Infantry Division on targets of opportunity consisting of enemy troop concentrations and tanks. During the night of 28-29 September 1944 there was interdiction and harassing fire by the light Artillery Battalions.⁵⁰

The Battle

By nightfall of 28 september, the position of the 134th Infantry was intact. The 137th Infantry had endured a day of confused and hard fighting, but had wiped out most of the Germans who had infiltrated to its rear and had reorganized and tied in the battalions in the forward positions. Nonetheless the enemy had finally succeeded in getting a foothold in this part of the forest. When the action waned the German and American foxholes lines lay hardly two hundred yard apart.⁵¹

During the night prisoners taken by the 137th Infantry told their captors that a big attack from Fresnes was scheduled for 0500 the next morning. To forestall the enemy General Baade ordered the 3rd Battalion, 320th Infantry, which had come up from reserve and was fresh, to attack at 0430 on a narrow front, spike down contact between the 134th and 137th along the north edge of the woods, and retake Hill 282 on Fresnes road. The 3rd Battalion counterattack jumped off at H Hour. Thirty minutes later the 1st Battalion, 320th Infantry, and the 3rd Battalion, 137th Infantry, joined in the fight and started a counterattack to clear the eastern edge of the woods. Both of the American counterattacks were checked as soon as they hit the German positions inside the forest.⁵²

The Battle

On 29 September the 35th Division G-2 was able to identify elements of the 559th VG Division and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division as the units opposing and engaging elements of the 35th Division.⁵³

Early on the 29th the Americans anticipated German counterattacks. Once again American artillery support thwarted enemy attempts at surprise.

On 29 September 1944 at 0455 there was a ten minute fire in preparation of the Division attack by the entire regrouped artillery.⁵⁴

The main German attack came at 0530 on 29 September, the enemy moving in from the direction of Fresnesen-Saulnois. Company L of the 137th was in the northeast tip of the Grémecey Forest and was the first to be hit. They determined to hold fast while the other companies strengthened their lines.⁵⁵

At 0600 all battalions were massing fires on Hill 282 and roads leading south from Fresnes-en-Saulnois, successfully breaking up and enery attack.⁵⁶

Frequent instances of small unit and individual herorism often influenced the battle as much as American

The Battle

artillery or air power. Leadership and tenacity proved to be necessary qualities in the defensive fight.

By 0830 [Company L was] completely surrounded. Fighting like tigers [they] tore through the encirclement of German forces and freed themselves from the trap. Their Commanding Officer, 1st Lieutenant Rex Hooper, Phoenix, Arizona, was wounded, and his Executive Officer, 1st Lieutenant Lawrence Malmed, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was captured. But Lieutenant Malmed, who was no stranger to the ways of the Germans, not only talked his captors into releasing him, but brought twelve of them back to his own lines as prisoners.

The Germans continued their tactics of infiltrating and surrounding troops with coordinated drives from the northeast against the 137th Infantry and the 3rd Battalion of the 134th from the north. L Company, commanded by Captain Greenlei, Hastings, Nebraska, bore the brunt of the attack. It was evident that the enemy must be cleared from the Grémecey Forest before they had an opportunity to regroup for a large scale attack.⁵⁷

At 1600 28 September, the 35th Division had gained control of the 320th Infantry and planned for it to attack between the two forward regiments.

The Battle

The 320th Infantry (minus the 1st Battalion and with the Co B 737th Tank Battalion and one Platoon of Co D 737th Tank Battalion attached) reverted to Division control from Corps Reserve on 28 September 1944 at 1600. The Regiment was ordered to attack with one Battalion on 29 September 1944 at 0430 from the vicinity of the hill northeast along the road to secure the east edge of the Forêt de Grémecey, between the 134th and 137th Infantry. At 1200 the 3rd Battalion had reached the objective and contact was being made with the adjacent units.⁵⁸

Air action had been brief on 28 September, focusing on concentrations of enemy strength in reported assembly areas. American air power gave its ground forces a chance to regroup and continue defending across a wide front.

Fighter-bombers bombed and strafed targets in the Château Salinschambrey area on the afternoon of 28 September 1944.⁵⁹

Air support continued during the night and the regiments' lines remained intact as they prepared for further attacks by the enemy. Casualties increased some on the 28th, especially among the missing. There were 11 killed 48 wounded and 20 unaccounted for. Nine prisoners were taken.⁶⁰

The Battle

Like American air power, American artillery continued to play a major role in keeping the Germans off-balance. Artillery units because of their ability to instantaneously respond, often disrupted German efforts just as the Germans were preparing for a main attack. Once again the history of the battle recounts evidence of enemy infiltration with the objective of surrounding friendly troops.

Enemy concentrations to the front being reported by forward observers, the Artillery shelled the positions. The Regiments, reinforced jumped off at 0500 on 29 September 1944 to retake the forward edge of the Forêt de Grémecey. Some enemy infiltration took place in the 3rd Battalion area during the morning of 29 September 1944.⁶¹

German infantry attacked at other points in the 3rd Battalion area, and continued their tactics of infiltrating and surrounding our troops. This menace reached serious proportions during the day when Co K lost an entire platoon, and over a hundred men in the 3rd Battalion as a whole [were] believed captured.⁶²

Air support was vital, but was available only during periods of good weather. American close-air proved decisive

The Battle

in a few encounters but was not able to influence the battle continuously because of weather.

Air protection continued during the day, and there was little tank activity reported. Late in the day action slowed down considerably, and reports from the FFI and other sources hinted that the Germans were pulling back to organize for an all-out attack.⁶³

Missions were flown approximately every hour on the morning of 29 September 1944 and targets were hit in the vicinity of the towns of Chambrey, Jallaucourt, Salins, Mallaucourt Sur Seille and Fresnes.⁶⁴

The fighting intensified especially in the thick forest. At this point in the battle of the Forêt de Grémecey both forward regiments, as well as the fresh 320th Infantry were heavily engaged.

Inside the forest perimeter the fight turned into a confused succession of hand-to-hand battles fought independently by companies, platoon, and squads from the 137th, the 134th, and the 320th. As the day progressed the five American battalions slowly won the upper hand, while friendly artillery and the ubiquitous fighter-bombers isolated the forest battleground. By 1830 the 3rd Battalion, 320th Infantry, behind a company of

The Battle

tanks which crushed and blasted the German machine gunners holding up the advance, had regained the northern rim of the woods and stationed itself at the seam between the 134th and the 137th. But the latter regiment, harassed by a series of counterattacks from the east, could not drive the opposing infantry out of the woods. Over on the left flank of the 35th Division, F Company of the 134th advanced the American line by a sortie which took the town of Han, whose aged stone buildings had proved impervious to shelling by the divisional 105mm howitzers. Although the elements of the 1120th Regiment (553rd VG Division) in the neighborhood of Han were weak, the Germans followed their usual custom and counterattacked immediately, but with nothing except casualties for their pains.⁶⁵

During the afternoon of 29 September General Baade had visited seven of his battalion commanders. He found general agreement that the situation was tense, but not yet desperate. Each officer was of the opinion that the front was too wide and the American troops far too extended to prevent enemy infiltration. Furthermore, the woods were so dense, the trails so few, and the enemy knowledge of the forest so accurate that linear defense could hardly be successful. The only solution was to locate the infiltrating detachments and root them out of the woods.⁶⁶

The Battle

Lack of trained personnel and ammunition hindered the Germans. The chain of command decisions at the battle scene were influenced directly by Hitler, who had little grasp for the tactical situation. He hindered his ground commanders, who were very capable and had conducted a masterful battle. Due to hinderences from above and limitations on manpower and logistics, these brilliant ground commanders could not achieve success.

General Muehlen, commander of the 559th VG Division, also had his problems. He struggled against a combination of factors unfavorable to his division in the fight for the Forêt de Grémecey. First, and perhaps most important, the 559th and its attachments had been thrown into the battle piecemeal. The 559th had received very little training as a unit, even by 1944 standards, and lack of training showed up very quickly in woods fighting. Artillery support was very limited-both guns and ammunition were in short supply. Finally, the American troops fought most stubbornly and used the World War I trenches, which cut through the forest, to good advantage.

The difficulties besetting Muehlen as a division commander concerned with performance of his single unit, however, reflected only a minor portion of "the big picture" pondered by his superiors. Late in the afternoon of the 29th,

The Battle

after a meeting with Field Marshall Rundstedt, General Balck sent word to the First Army that the attack to win the Forêt de Grémecey would have to be ended since the First and Fifth Panzer Army drive to the Moselle was now out of the question. The XIII SS Corps did not acknowledge the receipt of this order until the middle of the next morning - perhaps because Priess felt that success was within his grasp - and the fight for the forest continued. Priess had just received reinforcements: the 115th Fuesilier Battalion of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 73rd Regiment of the 19th VG Division, which had come down from Thionville. OB WEST already had ordered the immediate release of the 106th Panzer Brigade, which was badly needed by the hard-pressed Nineteenth Army, but Priess found several convenient difficulties to delay the transfer and managed to send only one tank platoon out on the night of 29 September. With this accumulated strength the XIII Corps commander now ordered an all-out attack to take the Forêt de Grémecey, planning to send the fresh troops in against the 134th Infantry on the left of the American line.⁶⁷

For the Americans [w]ith 105 men missing during the day, in addition to 11 killed and 35 wounded, it was apparent that the Germans must be cleared from the Grémecey Forest. [The Germans] many capabilities and possibilities of attack were a

The Battle

constant threat to the defense of our entire sector.⁶⁸

The 137th Infantry bearing the brunt of the bloody fighting on the 29th began to prepare to attack on the 30th.

The Regiment attacked on 30 September 1944 0630 to reestablish the positions left on 29 September 1944. Heavy casualties were sustained throughout the afternoon of 30 September 1944 from enemy infiltrations through the Forêt de Grémecey and from extremely heavy artillery fire. The 2nd Battalion's line was extremely thin and the advance of the enemy in that sector was stopped by committing the 133rd Engineer (C) Battalion to reinforce the line on HILL 282 North of Pettoncourt. During the night the 3rd Battalion 137th Infantry was relieved by the 320th Infantry.⁶⁹

On 29 September 1944 the 134th Infantry continued to improve its defensive positions. The 2nd Battalion cleaned up the town of Han during the afternoon. During the evening the 3rd Battalion established contact with the 320th Infantry on the right. On 30 September 1944 at 0530 the enemy attacked with forces estimated to be at least two companies. The 1st and 2nd Battalions continued the defense of the sector,

The Battle

receiving heavy artillery and mortar fire. Co A was committed to the 3rd Battalion area to clear out infiltration during the afternoon of 30 September 1944. The 3rd Battalion reestablished the break in its line and continued to mop up the infiltration resulting from the enemy's morning attack of 29 September 1944.⁷⁰

While the 137th and 134th improved their positions and made up losses, the 320th Infantry prepared to attack.

A plan was made for a coordinated attack, with the 320th Infantry to begin the following morning. An enemy attack was expected at 0500 from Fresnes, and to counter this the 3rd Battalion of the 320th was ordered to attack the Germans at that point at 0430. Our 2nd and 3rd Battalions were to attack at 0500, with the 1st Battalion of the 320th. Our 1st Battalion was ordered to hold its present position, with the 2nd Battalion of the 320th in reserve.⁷¹

"The 1st Battalion 320th Infantry was released to Regimental control at 2300 on 29 September 1944."⁷²

"The 2nd Battalion 320th Infantry remained in Division Reserve on 29 September 1944..."⁷³

The Battle

The 3rd Battalion 320th Infantry occupied the line along the northeast corner of the Forêt de Grémecey on 29 september 1944, and during the afternoon and evening established contact with the 134th Infantry.⁷⁴

During the last few days, the 559th VGD had attacked the forest of Gremécý west of Chateau-Salins, and pushed back the front of the American 35th Division. By 30 September, however, the Germans realized that they did not have the forces to carry out Hitler's orders to push the Allies back, retake Nancy, and eliminate enemy forces north of the Marne-Rhine Canal. The back of the Fifth Panzer Army attack had already been broken on the 29th; there was no possibility of obtaining reinforcements to develop a new push to reach the Moselle River. But the German First Army had made a significant improvement in the situation by counterattacking with the forces they had; the German After Action Report read in part:

IV. The effect of the Counterattack

Despite the fact that the counterattack of the "Heeresgruppe" had not reached its objective from an overall point of view, the front had been closed again, and pressure broken by this successful German defense at Metz and the assault

The Battle

of the 5 "AOK" [Armee Ober Commandos] in the area of the lower Seille. The Army could now expect with certainty that the enemy would not stage another large-scale offensive against the Saar territory without first making thorough preparations which would require weeks; this assumption was based upon previous experience. The Army had thus gained ample time to prepare for further defense and to strengthen its forces, and this was particularly important after the withdrawal of the 3 Panzer Grenadier Division for by this time the Army had no antitank forces left and was trying to get them back.

The attack by the enemy which followed against Metz and the lower Seille throughout the entire month of October confirmed the truth of this reasoning by the Army. These attacks were carried out against limited objectives and it appeared that they were launched for the purpose of improving the situation to pave the road for future operations.⁷⁵

Significant actions which took place on 30 September included the initial clash in the morning followed by slight losses of ground and more penetrations by infiltrating German forces which worried the XII Corps commander, General Eddy, to the point that he ordered a withdrawal behind the

The Battle

Seille River. Fortunately, General Patton countermanded and ordered an attack instead.

Back on 29 September, it had become clear to General Baade and his regimental commanders that the infiltrations which were causing so much difficulty could only be stopped by attacking to push forward, take the edge of the woods, and then clear out the infiltrators. They expected a German attack on 30 September at 0500 from Fresnes, so a spoiling attack was planned.

The 35 ID attacked with one battalion at 0430 30 September in the direction of Fresnes, followed by 3 more battalions at 0500 on a broader front. The 134th Regiment was to defend its positions and continue to mop up infiltrators. While 2/320 was retained as division reserve, the rest of the 320th Regiment attacked. The 3/320 launched the division attack followed, 30 minutes later, by 2/320, which had returned to regimental control at 2300 hours the night before. The 137th Regiment participated in the attack with its 2nd and 3rd battalions; the 1/137th held its defensive positions.

The attacks by the 320th Regiment and the Germans ran into each other almost immediately with little ground

The Battle

gained by either side. The rest of the division attack in this sector is recorded in the combat history of the 137th Infantry Regiment, which related:

The attack began, but progress was slow. The 2nd Battalion received heavy mortar fire, and at 1000 their left flank was being infiltrated and they began to drop back to their original positions. Continuing their infiltration and encircling tactics, the Germans moved in behind Company E and opened up, cutting off one entire platoon.

With the left flank open and a 700-yard gap between companies, the 2nd Battalion's defenses were in grave danger. The Germans, throwing a barrage of mortar and machine gun fire in front of them, poured through the gap on the left flank of Company E, and moved toward Gremecey. At this point the 133rd Engineer Battalion was rushed from Pettincourt and committed to halt the advance. With their assistance, the 2nd Battalion held off the Germans until its lines could be organized. It was almost midnight before the lines were again established.

The attack on the 2nd Battalion positions proved to be the main German effort of the day.⁷⁶

It is interesting to note several observations of our troops which were recorded in the XII Corps G-2 report:

The Battle

Our troops are unskilled in, and do not practice, the extremely profitable trick of infiltration. They are easily disorganized by German infiltrations, and will not advance when a small enemy force is in their rear or on their flank.

German PW's seem to have the utmost respect for our superior material -- artillery, tanks, airforce -- but are openly contemptuous of our infantry; claiming that they are timid, unskilled, and unresourceful.

Commanders state that the Stars and Stripes has done immeasurable harm in playing up demobilization. Men believing that the war will be finished in a week or two are unwilling to take the chances incident to aggressive combat.⁷⁷

The resistance of the Germans to the 35th Infantry Division attack in the eastern portion of the woods is described:

... the Germans had blasted trees across all the forest trails along which tanks might move; the American infantry, widely extended as the companies diminished in rifle strength, could neither move forward nor prevent the enemy from filtering in to the flanks and rear under concealment of the morning fog. German mortars and

The Battle

field guns kept up an incessant fire, and casualties from tree burst mounted rapidly. One such burst killed Major W. G. Gillis, commanding the 1st Battalion of the 320th.⁷⁸

A report of the German actions in the 134th section follows:

Before first light on 30 September the 115th Fuesilier Battalion, heavily armed with automatic weapons, struck the right flank of the 134th, where the 3rd Battalion was deployed. The attack moved into the woods behind L Company and was pressed so stubbornly that the regimental reserve of the 134th had to be rushed into the fight. The 73rd regiment, which had assembled behind the 115th, followed up with an assault on a wider front, supported by continuous artillery and mortar fire. The fight inside the woods mounted in intensity as the day wore on and as more and more of the enemy infantry infiltrated on the right of the 134th.⁷⁹

The reaction by the 134th Regiment to the strong German attack is detailed in their regimental history, which states:

The Battle

A heavy shelling of Company L at 0440, September 30, heralded another attack. At 0600 enemy infantry hit the center of that company. Machine guns and rifles opened fire along a 400-yard front; men of the anti-tank platoon joined the line and began firing anti-tank rockets; artillery and mortar concentration fell into the ravine in front of the woods with deadly effect. At 0615 Captain Greenlief reported that anti-personnel mines in the woods had killed and wounded a large number of the enemy, but large numbers of others still were coming. At 0645 Major Wood [3rd Battalion Commander] decided to commit his reserve - Company I; and fifteen minutes later the regimental reserve - Company A - went to the assistance of the 3rd Battalion. LT William Chavet of Omaha, led Company I up a ravine which ran along the east side of the Farm Rhin de Bois - it was the execution of a pre-determined plan for counterattack - to the area of Company L. When over 30 prisoners had been taken, and Company I reached the edge of the woods to see Germans withdrawing towards Jallaucourt, it seemed that the attack had stopped. But such was not the case, for other groups of enemy were coming in toward L Company's command post. They had penetrated all the way through the woods in that particular area - all the way to the position of a section of Company M's 81mm mortars.

With the sudden approach of the enemy, the mortar crews had abandoned their guns and joined

The Battle

Company L in its defense. Corporal Homer Gettler of Indiana, and Corporal Paul E. Faulconer of Texas, mortar gunners for the section, were feeling rather helpless in this situation inasmuch as they were armed only with pistols. Then they remembered that they had left a considerable amount of ammunition with their mortars, and those weapons still were in firing condition. Should the enemy seize them he might turn them to the support of his attack. As soon as they determined the main area of the enemy attack they hurried back to the mortars. Just as they arrived at the position, enemy fire kill Corporal Gettler; but Faulconer was determined to carry out their plan alone. Quickly he aimed the mortar, and then, in rapid succession fired all the remaining shells. Not only did he keep the ammunition from falling into German hands, but he turned it to effective use to break up groups of the approaching Germans.

Meanwhile men of Company L were battling to save their command post. Staff Sergeant Albert Grobe of Oregon, had his trigger finger shot off, but he stood his ground to destroy his assailants; 60mm mortars, in position just outside the woods, proved to be a determining factor with their short-range bursts. (Sharing the plight of the beleaguered defenders of the L Company C.P. was Major Wood, who had gone forward during the earlier development of the attack.)

Another "battle of the C.P." developed in Company K. German soldiers had come through the

The Battle

opening in L Company and moved through the woods all the way to K Company's C.P. without encountering any of that company's front line troops. LT Edward Kennedy of Pennsylvania, company executive officer, quickly organized his few headquarters men for the defense; he manned a machine gun mounted on a jeep. The fire power was enough to stop the enemy, and then Kennedy had the jeep move down the forest road while he continued to fire. But a sudden rocket from an enemy "Bazooka" demolished the jeep and killed the driver and seriously wounded the other occupants. But the command post had been saved.

There still was danger to the right, however, the enemy was making another attack against the 320th Infantry, and was threatening the right flank of Company K even while its command post was being attacked from the left. When a machine gun opened fire on the guns of the regimental anti-tank platoon which was protecting that flank, Lieutenant Lyle Reishus, platoon leader, made his way forward and destroyed the enemy crew with two hand grenades. Then he discovered a group of about 30 enemy infantrymen approaching Company K's exposed right flank. He hurried back to his platoon and organized an effective defensive line to protect the flank and rear of Company K and his own guns and equipment.

The situation was under control at K Company by 1430, and now Company A moved up the ravine to join Company I in the counterattack to repel the

The Battle

enemy from the position and restore the line. LT Hum, now commanding Company A, was wounded, much to his disgust, early in the encounter. Persistent efforts, however, were effective, and by evening most of the Germans had been driven from the woods.

Now during this action the regimental commander and his S-3 were called to a meeting at the command post of the 320th Infantry.⁸⁰

It was at this meeting, at the 320th Regimental CP, that the XII Corps commander, MG Eddy, would issue the withdrawal order.

Meanwhile, the corps commander had been kept informed of the German progress and sometime around 1400 called a conference in Bioncourt at the command post of the 320th Infantry. General Gaffey, the Third Army chief of staff, was present, as was General Grow, whose 6th Armored Division now constituted the Third Army reserve. All three regimental commanders of the 35th were there, plus General Baade, General Sebree, and members of the 35th Division staff. The officers had just gathered in the building which housed the command post when shellfire struck in the yard where the aides and orderlies were waiting. Several in the yard were killed or wounded, including some who had been with General Eddy

The Battle

since his days in North Africa. The officers inside the building gave what help they could, then returned to a consideration of the problem at hand. General Eddy was particularly concerned about the German penetrations in the 137th sector northeast of Grémecey, and was prepared to order a general withdrawal from the Forêt de Grémecey, with the aim of making a stand behind the Seille River. Eddy was keenly aware of the danger to the 4th Armored Division in the event that the German attack broke through the lines of the 35th. In addition he was worried by the fact that the XII Corps positions were split by the Seille River, and by intelligence reports that the Germans were preparing to blow a large dam at the Etang de Lindre, southeast of Dieuze, so as to flood the waters of Seille and isolate the American troops that were on the north bank.

What now passed between General Eddy and the others in the command post is not clear. Eddy polled each of the regimental commander present; they seem to have agreed that further German infiltration could not be halted. Whether General Baade was consulted is doubtful. Later he contended that he was not in favor of a withdrawal, but believe that General Gaffey and General Eddy were agreed on this course and so made no protest. In any case the corps commander appears to have taken Baades's concurrence for granted. The fact that General Baade already had given the order committing his final reserve was

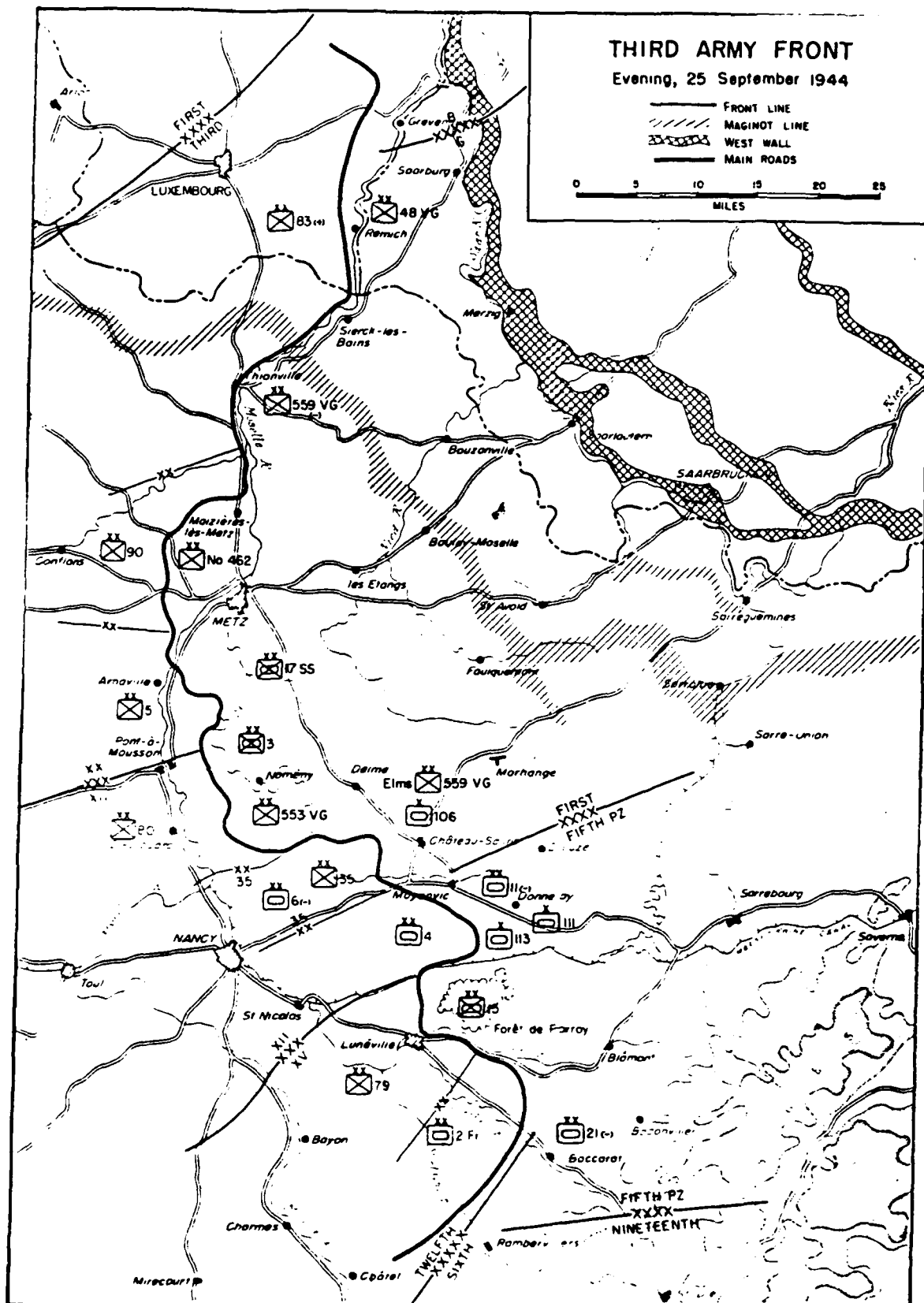
The Battle

known to General Eddy. Whatever the considerations involved, the corps commander issued orders about 1420 for the 35th Division to retire behind the Seille River as soon as night came. General Grow was told to cover the withdrawal with his armor, and plans were made to alert the 4th Armored Division in preparation for a retrograde movement to the west.⁸¹

What happened next is described in Martin Blumenson's book, The Patton Papers, which includes quotes from Patton's war diary:

He [Patton] had a bad scare on September 30. He had sent Gaffey [Chief of Staff, Third U.S. Army] to the XII Corps, and at 3 P.M., Gaffey phoned and said that Patton "had best come to Nancy as fast as I could." He flew, arrived in 45 minutes, and found that Eddy had ordered two regiments of the 35th Division holding the woods west of Château-Salins to withdraw. Gaffey had heard Eddy give the order, had not protested, but had sent for Patton.

"I was very angry." Two-thirds of the 6th Armored Division was available, and Patton had told Eddy the day before to commit the armor if the Germans attacked. "Why Eddy did not do so, I cannot make up my mind."



T. Barlett

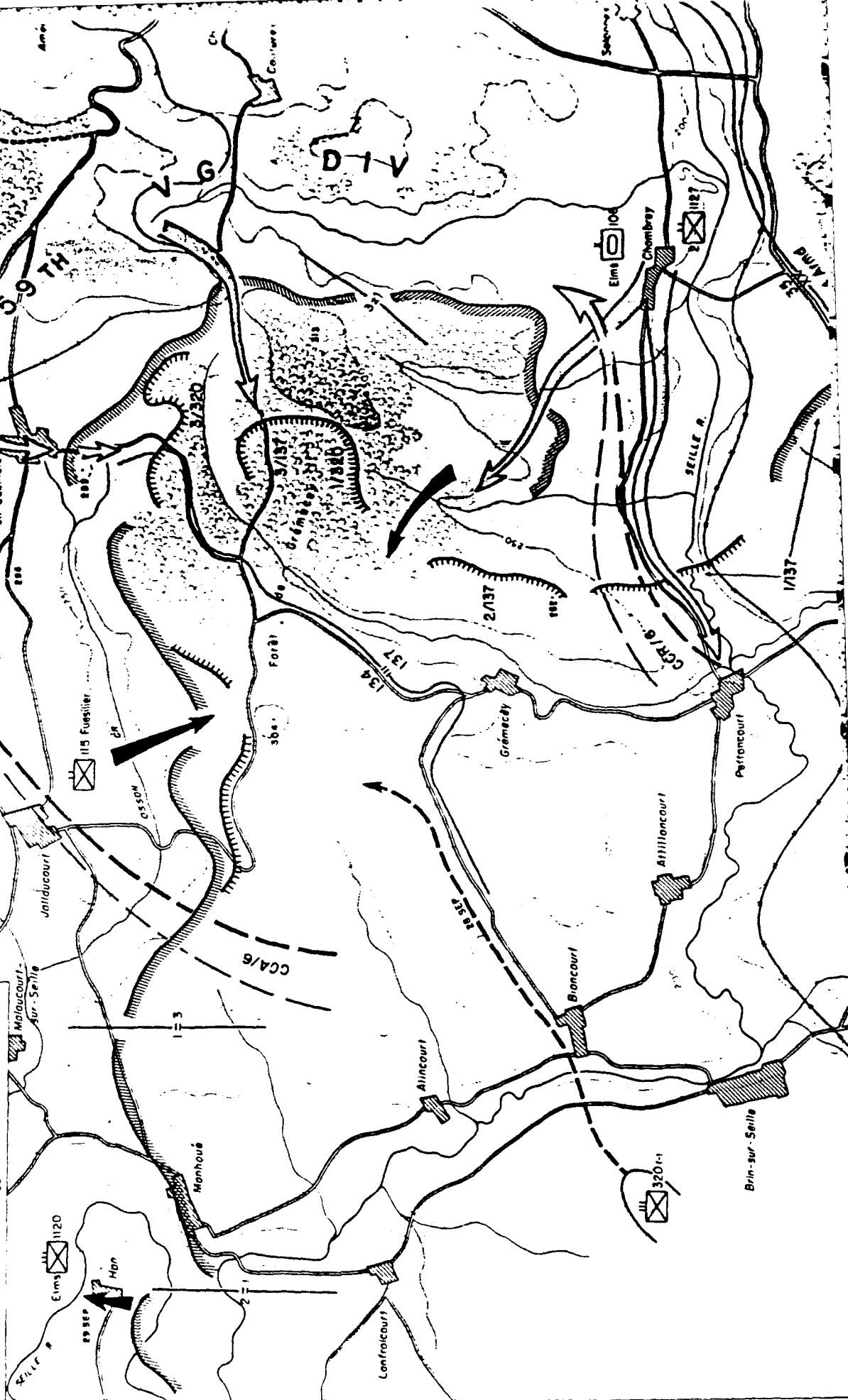
MAP NO. XXII

FORÊT DE GREMECEY

27 - 30 September 1944

- ENEMY POSITIONS, MORNING 27 SEPTEMBER
- GERMAN ATTACKS, 27-29 SEPTEMBER
- ENEMY POSITIONS (APPROX), NOON 30 SEP
- AXIS OF GERMAN ATTACK, 30 SEPTEMBER
- AXIS OF PROJECTED ATTACK, 6TH ARMD DIV
- POSSIBILITIES AS OF 27 SEPTEMBER

Elevations in meters
0 1000 2000
YARDS



The Battle

Eddy was at the 6th Armored Division command post, so Patton and Gaffey drove there and sent for Baade, the 35th Division commander. Patton told all three generals, Eddy, Baade, and Grow, that "I was disgusted with them." He wanted the 6th to counterattack in the morning at the latest - that evening if the troops could get across the river by then. He also ordered the generals involved to lead their troops personally "to make up for their shortcomings." Baade was to go to the front. Grow was to retake the woods "or not come back." Patton was tough because he felt that giving up the ground would be a tremendous boost to German morale - like presenting them with 100,000 men.

Patton then phoned the XX Corps and told Walker to collect trucks to be ready, on call, to move a regiment of the 90th Division, so that if the 35th broke, "as it may well do," there would be an additional unit available.

"Eddy was very manly in assuming full responsibility for the withdrawal order, but I cannot understand his frame of mind. He worries too much. I will do all the worrying necessary. the Corps commanders must fight. I would get rid of him but I do not know of any other any better except possibly Harmon, now commanding the 2nd Armored Division. One explanation of Eddy's emotional failure may be that earlier in the afternoon, he, Gaffey, and Grow were all nearly killed by shell fire, and Gaffey's aide...and

The Battle

Grow's aide were hit. This may, unknown to them, have shattered their nerves.

"After I got through cussing them out, I told them the same thing I told Truscott in Sicily, namely, 'Now I will go home as I know you will win.' I feel they will. If I stayed, it would show lack of confidence. We must remember that the German is not a superman...

"It is now 0010, October 1, and I have heard nothing. I have called the chief of staff, XII Corps, and find that he is asleep, so things are probably all right."⁸²

The availability of at least two of the combat commands of the 6th Armored Division (6th AD) is verified by the 6th Armored Division G-3 Periodic Report, dated 29 1200 Sep 44. Combat Command A (CCA) had moved to a position East of Champenoux. It was prepared for two contingencies - to take the high ground, in the vicinity of Jallaucourt and drive east in conjunction with elements of the 35th Infantry Division (35th ID), or cover a withdrawal of the 35th. Combat Command B (CCB) was in position just north of Leyer and was prepared to support the 134th Regiment or to block penetration in the 2/134 sector. Combat Command R (CCR) was expected to return to 6th AD control and move into an assembly area in the vicinity of Saulyeres.

The Battle

As it turned out, the 6th AD G-3 had been stationed at the 137th Regiment's CP in preparation for the commitment of any 6th AD elements in the 35th ID zone. As a result of German pressure on 30 September, CCA and CCR were enroute to cross the Seille when General Patton countermanded the withdrawal order.

Patton could not have been more correct; his decision to attack coincided with the German decision to withdraw. Harris' CCR and Hanson's CCA were to attack with the 35th ID. The following events occurred on 1 October:

The new schemes of maneuver called for the two combat commands to make a co-ordinated attack with the 35th Division and drive the Germans out of the villages north and east of the Forêt de Grémecey which had served as sally ports for the attacks hurled against the 35th. CCR would attack from the lines of the 137th Infantry east of Pettoncourt with the mission of seizing the high ground north of the village of Chambrey. CCA would swing through the left wing of the 35th, clear the Germans from the northwest edge of the forest, and occupy the ridge between Lemoncourt and Fresnes which commanded the road net running into the woods. The 35th Division would mop up inside the forest, then relieve the armor.

The Battle

Five nights before, the 25th Armored Engineer Battalion had completed a treadway bridge across the Seille in the vicinity of Brin-sur-Seille. Here Hanson crossed his command, bivouacking on the night of the 30th near Alincourt, about a mile south of the 134th Infantry positions. Harris crossed the main corps bridge at Pettoncourt and turned east. The movement of the two columns, favored by bright moonlight, went off without a hitch.⁸³

The attack started at 0620; by 0900 both CCA and CCR had reached their objectives and continued to clear them of enemy.

CCR drew heavy casualties from mines and 88mm antitank guns as soon as it passed the American infantry lines; two tank company commanders were killed. By midmorning, however, CCR had cleared the high ground, secured it with engineers, tank destroyers, and antiaircraft artillery detachments, and turned to attack Chambrey. Although the Germans fought stubbornly in the half-burned town under order to hold until the last man, in three-quarters of an hour the American tanks had command of the streets. Through the rainy afternoon CCR held Chambrey, in spite of constant shelling and repeated counterattacks, while infantry from the 137th moved into the

The Battle

village to relieve the armor. About 2000 Harris was relieved and the infantry had set up a combat outpost north of Chambrey.⁸⁴

The other task force, CCA, demonstrated the value of a combined infantry/tank attack:

CCA advanced rapidly in its zone, skirting close to the west edge of the Forêt de Grémecey in order to flush out the Germans there. Hanson's tankers had a field day with their .50-caliber machine guns along the northwestern fringe of the woods, literally strewing the ground with dead Germans. Some of the medium tanks mired down at Osson Creek and the attack was brought to a halt while the advance guard, under fire, built log bridges for the light vehicles. The infantry dismounted from their half-tracks and went on to the objective, the medium tanks following when a permanent bridge was found intact. In spite of the accurate counterbattery fire maintained by the American guns, the German artillery had kept up a ragged fire. The few enemy infantry left in this area, however, showed little inclination to fight and came forward with hands above their heads. The attackers encircled Jallaucourt, finding only a few Germans. When finally in command of the Lemoncourt-Fresnes ridge, CCA turned its guns back on the Forêt de Grémecey. But inside of the woods

The Battle

American and Germans were fighting at such close quarters that the 35th Division came under this tank fire and radioed word to the armor to wait until the Germans could be driven out of the woods--"and then kill them." During the afternoon and evening CCA turned over the ground it had taken to the 134th Infantry and reverted, with CCR, to the XII Corps reserve. Two combat commands had carried out General Patton's orders and restored the XII Corps main line of resistance, but the day of action had cost them over two hundred casualties and eleven tanks. Most of these losses were incurred after the armor had arrived at its objective.⁸⁵

The push by the 35th Infantry Division did not actually kick off until about the time the two 6th Armored Division task forces (CCA and CCR) had nearly reached their objectives. The attack started at 0900 in the 137th sector:

The 2nd Battalion, 137th, advanced to the east and by mid-afternoon was at the southwest edge of the Bois de Chambrey. A concentrated attack was launched to the north to clear the woods of the enemy and reestablish the defensive position on the east end of the woods. Company B of the 137th also advanced, and by 1700, it was fighting in the streets of Chambrey against a superior force.

The Battle

In about three hours, the company had established itself in the town and driven the Germans about a thousand yards to the east and northeast.

It was during this fight that General Baade was wounded by a shell splinter from German artillery. He was operated on at the division Medical Clearing Company and returned to command the Santa Fe on the following morning.

The manner of the German concentration led General Sebree, who was temporarily in command during General Baade's absence, to believe that they would make a counter-offensive and try to recapture the town. All the Battalion anti-tank guns were moved into the approaches to the town, and road blocks were placed on all roads leading into it. General Sebree intended to hold his hard fought for advantages at all costs.

Meanwhile, tanks from the 737th were employed to pin down the enemy in the woods, while the 137th's 2nd Battalion and Company A advanced north. By dark they reached a point only a few hundred yards away from the eastern edge of the Bois de Chambrey. The 320th continued to punch at the Germans and advanced to the east against bitter resistance. The 2nd Battalion, attacking behind artillery preparation, routed the enemy out of recently re-enforced World War I fortifications penetrating the eastern edge of Grémecey Forest. Combat Command A of the 6th accomplished its mission without difficulty.

The Battle

The expected German counter-attack against Chambrey did not materialize and the next few days were spent improving the defensive positions.⁸⁶

This action on 1 October 1944 brought to a close the Forêt de Grémecey battle. During the first half of October, the only significant adjustment which took place in the area was a limited attack to the north of the forest, designed to eliminate the salient in the XII Corps line.

On 2 October, German activity had not ceased; but rather, there was a change in their purpose - they were withdrawing! The units of the 35th Infantry Division remained alert the entire day but enemy contact dwindled to nothing.

After beating off the heaviest German attacks the Division's units had yet encountered, the Division remained in their defensive positions for approximately another week. The entire XII Corps, effective 2 October, "consolidated its positions and aggressively patrolled to the east."⁸⁷

It was during this defensive lull that General Patton visited the 35th Infantry Division area.

[Patton] drove to Nancy on October 2, then to the woods where the fighting had taken place. He

The Battle

presented Bronze Stars to two regimental commanders in the 35th Division. He visited P. Wood, called on Grow, saw Baade, who had been wounded in the chin, and gave him a Bronze Star. He went to the hospitals in Nancy and talked to about 200 wounded men. "I think I did a good job. Today morale seemed high." [Remarked Patton.]⁸⁸

As a final hurrah, and during their withdrawal, the Germans dropped propaganda leaflets into the 35th Division's area:

Assuring [the Division] that the Germans would never be conquered, and taunting the 35th for fighting and dying in vain." Give yourselves up to us," they persuaded, "and save your lives for future happiness."

[The 35th Division] Santa Fe men laughed at the leaflets and sent them home as souvenirs.⁸⁹

B. Key Events.

On 26 September, preceeding the German offensive, the 3rd Battalion, 137th Infantry observed increased enemy activity in the vicinity of Chambrey, and the 4th Armored Division located concentrations of troops and tanks in the vicinity of Juvelize and Leyey. Neither unit attempted to

The Battle

interdict the forces that eventually were allowed to mass for the attack. A factor which precluded effective interdiction was the poor weather on 26 September preventing the use of Allied air power.

The commitment of the 35th Infantry Division reserves by MG Baade on 27 September was another critical turning point. This action successfully forestalled the German advance along the Chambrey-Bettancourt highway. Effective use of massed artillery also assisted in blunting this attack.

Again on 28 September the massing of the fires of 11 artillery battalions thwarted German efforts to mass armor for a counterattack from Jallaucourt.

The effective, although weather inhibited, use of U.S. air power on 28 September, successfully broke up armored attacks from Chambrey, Coutrer, and Jallaucourt.

Small unit cohesiveness and courage on the part of elements of both the 137th and 134th Regiments on 28 September prevented encirclement by the Germans.

C. The Outcome.

The Battle

The American forces are generally regarded as the victors in the battle of Forêt de Grémecey. The victory was not clear-cut, nor was it exceptionally noteworthy. In fact, the battle could have easily become an American defeat. The primary factor which snatched victory from the jaws of the possible defeat was LTG Patton's order to counterattack on 30 September 1944, countermanding MG Eddy's order to have the 35th Infantry Division withdraw from the Forêt de Grémecey sector.

Although the battle was an American victory there were several detractors. Since the Normandy Invasion, the Allied forces had achieved remarkable offensive success. Therefore, when the Third U.S. Army was ordered to assume defensive positions, it was the first time that the battlefield initiative had been taken away from the American force. It was apparent that the Army's soldiers and leaders were untested in a European defensive scenerio. Specifically, the 35th Infantry Division had to establish and maintain a linear defense of a salient, the Forêt de Grémecey. This defense extended over approximately a twelve mile distance and therefore made mutually supportive efforts between units almost impossible. The sheer distance of the frontages, and the distances between American units created an opportunity

The Battle

for the Germans to exploit the situation and regain the initiative. Infiltration of German units between and around the American defenders permitted the attackers to disrupt the American lines of communication and threatened encirclement of American forces (several small units were in fact encircled and had to fight back to friendly lines). The problems caused by German infiltration tactics influenced MG Eddy's ill fated decision to order the withdrawal of the 35th Infantry Division from the Forêt de Grémecey. Additionally, these infiltration tactics took a toll on American morale. Prior to the battle, rumor circulated that the Germans were defeated and about to surrender; therefore, many American troops were overly cautious. No one wanted to be the last man killed in the war.

The greatest positive contributors to the American victory, aside from LTG Patton's offensive demand, were: artillery; firepower; air superiority; numerical superiority (personnel and equipment); and aggressive actions of selected small units. The combination of these factors outweighed the previously stated American weaknesses, and destroyed the German offensive initiative.

By mid-September 1944, the German Army was on the ropes. Supplies and manpower had become critical; the two

The Battle

front war was pressing near the German heartland. The Luftwaffe was unable to establish air superiority and the German industrial base was being destroyed. Hitler was unwilling to accept defeat and continued to demand the resumption of the offense to destroy the Allied forces threatening Germany's western border.

The volksgrenadier divisions had been recently organized; in the haste of their formation and the criticality of the situation at hand, training was nonexistent. As a result new German soldiers trained under fire. Additionally, with the lack of mobility offered by the volksgrenadier division, offensive actions were slow and limited, relying on dismounted infantry tactics. The superiority of American firepower caused the Germans to use avenues of approach which afforded the best cover and concealment. Thus, Germans concentrated primarily in forested areas. The combination of these factors mandated the German's attack through the Forêt de Grémecey. Their superior infiltration techniques almost secured their objective, and in turn victory.

Whenever German soldiers or equipment were lost the Army dwindled - personnel and equipment replacements were extremely limited. In many cases the German Army would have

The Battle

to reconstitute a unit by combining it with other attrited units. In order to reinforce or supplement their main tactical effort they shifted units from sector to sector. This created difficult command and control problems that were not easily overcome.

In addition, German units were committed piecemeal and actions were not coordinated. They were unable to achieve their objective and were defeated. Had the American force been properly supplied, and had a pursuit followed the German withdrawal, the German force could have been totally destroyed or forced to surrender. The German Army was allowed to escape (although severely crippled) to fight again. This failure to exploit success was the major limiting factor in the American victory of Forêt de Grémecey.

CHAPTER 5

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTION

The significance of the battle of the Forêt de Grémecey can be assessed in two ways: immediate and long-term. These will lead to the lessons learned.

A. Immediate Significance.

The battle was a decisive one for the Third U.S. Army as the Forêt de Grémecey was a vital section of ground commanding the main highway to the city of Nancy, from the east. Had the Germans successfully penetrated the 35th Infantry Division's sector and consolidated their hold in Nancy, it would have been very difficult to dislodge them. The timely and personal countermand to the XII (US) Corps order to withdraw by the Third Army Commander, LTG Patton saved the situation. This battle was part of the Lorraine Campaign, which was a concerted effort by the Allied forces to force the German units back to the West Wall, penetrate that defensive barrier, and advance to the Rhine River. It can therefore be said that the success of this battle was

The Significance

part of the events that led to the end of the Second World War.

The Forêt de Château-Salins, which was in German hands and close to the Forêt de Grémecey, provided ample cover for large-scale troop concentrations and the Germans wanted to secure it by occupying the Forêt de Grémecey. Their eventual defeat at Grémecey caused their withdrawal from Château-Salins, hence the demise of that troop concentration.

The Forêt de Grémecey also commanded the highway which was a major line of communication to the 4th Armored Division. Its occupation also provided some protection for the southern flank of the 4th Armored Division.

B. Long-Term Significance.

The battle of Forêt de Grémecey was part of a series of battles that led to the total defeat of the German Army and a victory for the Allied forces. The battle also formed part of the effort to push the Germans out of France, thereby liberating it.

C. Lessons Learned.

The Significance

The battle, as has been mentioned, was one of the first American defensive battles of the European Campaign. Therefore, careful study of the battle yielded valuable lessons for subsequent defensive efforts. One of the most important of these lessons involved the value of the offense. The two halts in the Allied offensive (1-7 September and 23 September - 7 October) permitted German forces to regroup and mass forces for counterattacks. The lesson here is that massive logistics resources must be made available to continue the offense. If a breakdown occurs a window of opportunity for counterattack is provided to the enemy. This lesson was not well learned by U.S. forces. Subsequent halts in the offense provided the Germans the opportunity for the massive counterattack known as the Battle of the Bulge.

A related lesson concerned the American penchant for limited objective attacks. American forces continually failed to exploit small successes. As a result they wasted valuable resources hitting German strong points as opposed to striking weaknesses and isolating stronger German forces. This shortcoming derived from an incomplete understanding of

The Significance

the use of and immense combat power available to strong combined arms forces.

The battle of Forêt de Grémecey provided American forces extremely valuable experience in the use of all elements of a combined arms force. Initially in the battle American successes were obtained by use of air power, artillery concentration and combined infantry and armored forces, but in most cases these combined arms were used in isolation, one from another. Not until late in the battle, when the 6th Armored Division was committed, were these forces truly integrated; the results were decisive. Our forces learned this lesson well, and future successes, in forestalling the German Bulge offensive and in the attack of the German homeland, were the result. This lesson has tremendous contemporary value as our understanding of the use of combined arms forces continues to be refined and forms the basis for our current Air-Land Battle doctrine.

These, then, were the major lessons learned by U.S. forces in the battle of Forêt de Grémecey: the value of the offense, the importance of exploiting success, and the use of combined arms forces. More detailed study yields many lessons of lesser significance, however. Some of these lesser consequence lessons were:

The Significance

1. Unit commanders were often frustrated by orders which were too complex and which failed to address time/distance factors.

2. Many orders and counter orders were issued at division level and above. This resulted in many unnecessary troop movements, added to the confusion, and frustrated the initiative of subordinate commanders.

3. U.S. forces were poorly trained in infiltration and patrolling techniques. This led to incomplete combat intelligence and gave the Germans the opportunity to exploit their mastery of these techniques by probing our lines to find our weak points and concentrating their attacks upon our weaknesses.

4. German forces were able to avoid major damage from artillery preparations by seeking cover during the preparations, then, as the fires were lifted, assuming their defensive positions. American forces, conversely, were often caught in the open by less predictable German artillery fires of shorter duration.

5. Preparation of our defensive positions was not as skillful as the Germans. Our lack of experience in the defense was responsible for this factor and led to many unnecessary casualties.

The Significance

6. American forces had a tendency to split battalions and regiments and commit them piecemeal. This damaged command and control mechanisms and violated the principle of unity of command.

The study of our past combat history is an extremely valuable tool for contemporary military students to continually refine their skills. To the extent that we fail to study our past battles in detail, we are virtually bound to repeat our past mistakes in future wars. The battle of Forêt de Grémecey was an important battle in World War II, and its study has surely contributed to the basis for not only our current doctrine, but for the way our forces are organized and equipped today. The value of the study of past battles certainly has not escaped our Soviet adversaries. They have gained valuable insights into our strengths and weaknesses through detailed study of such battles as the Forêt de Grémecey. Therefore, we must not lose sight of the necessity to continue to refine our understanding of this important juncture of our past combat history.

APPENDIX A

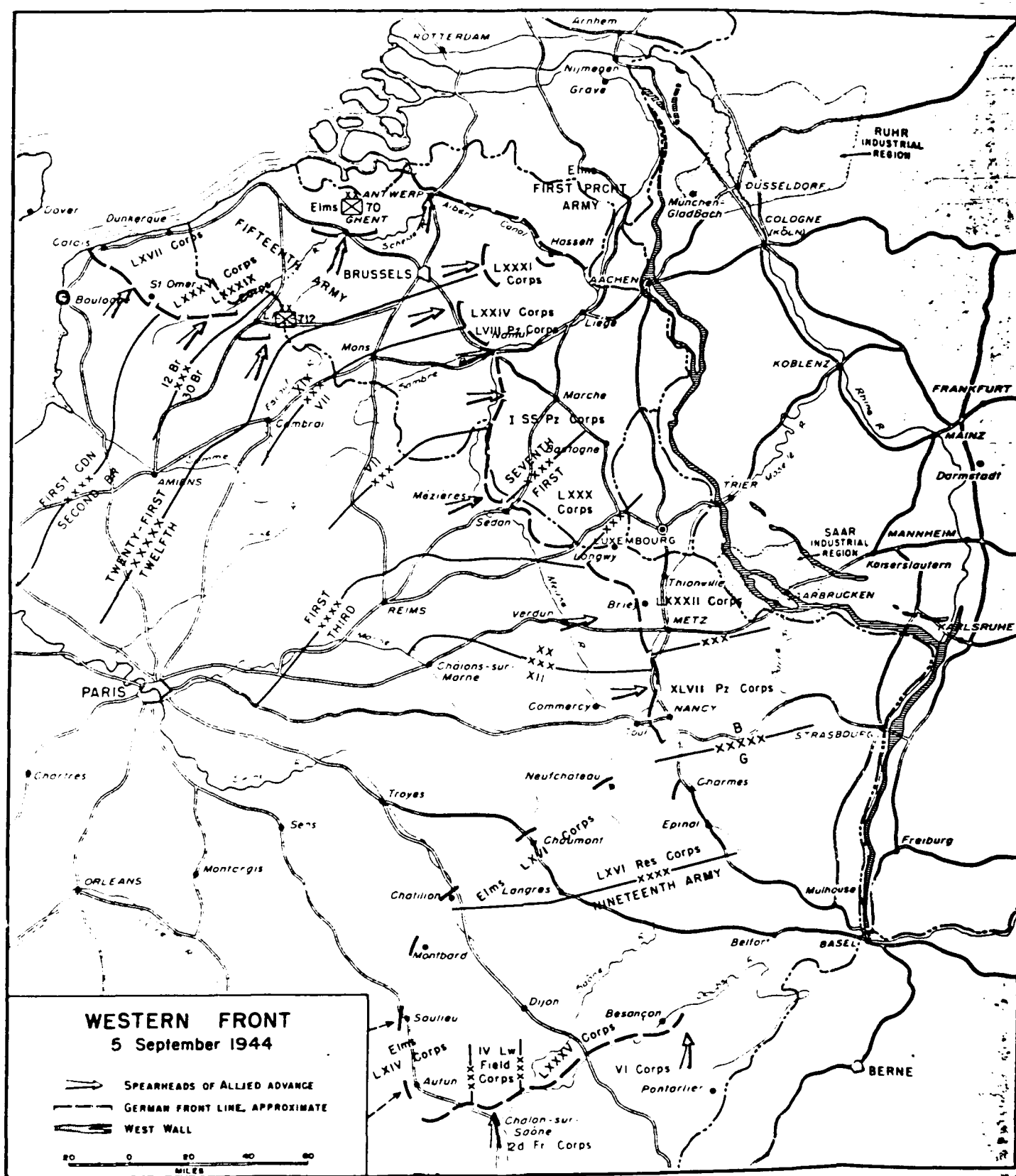
Area and Battle Maps*

Forêt de Grémecey

* All maps used in Appendix A are contained in The Lorraine Campaign a volume of The European Theater of Operations, H.M. Cole, ed., Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950.

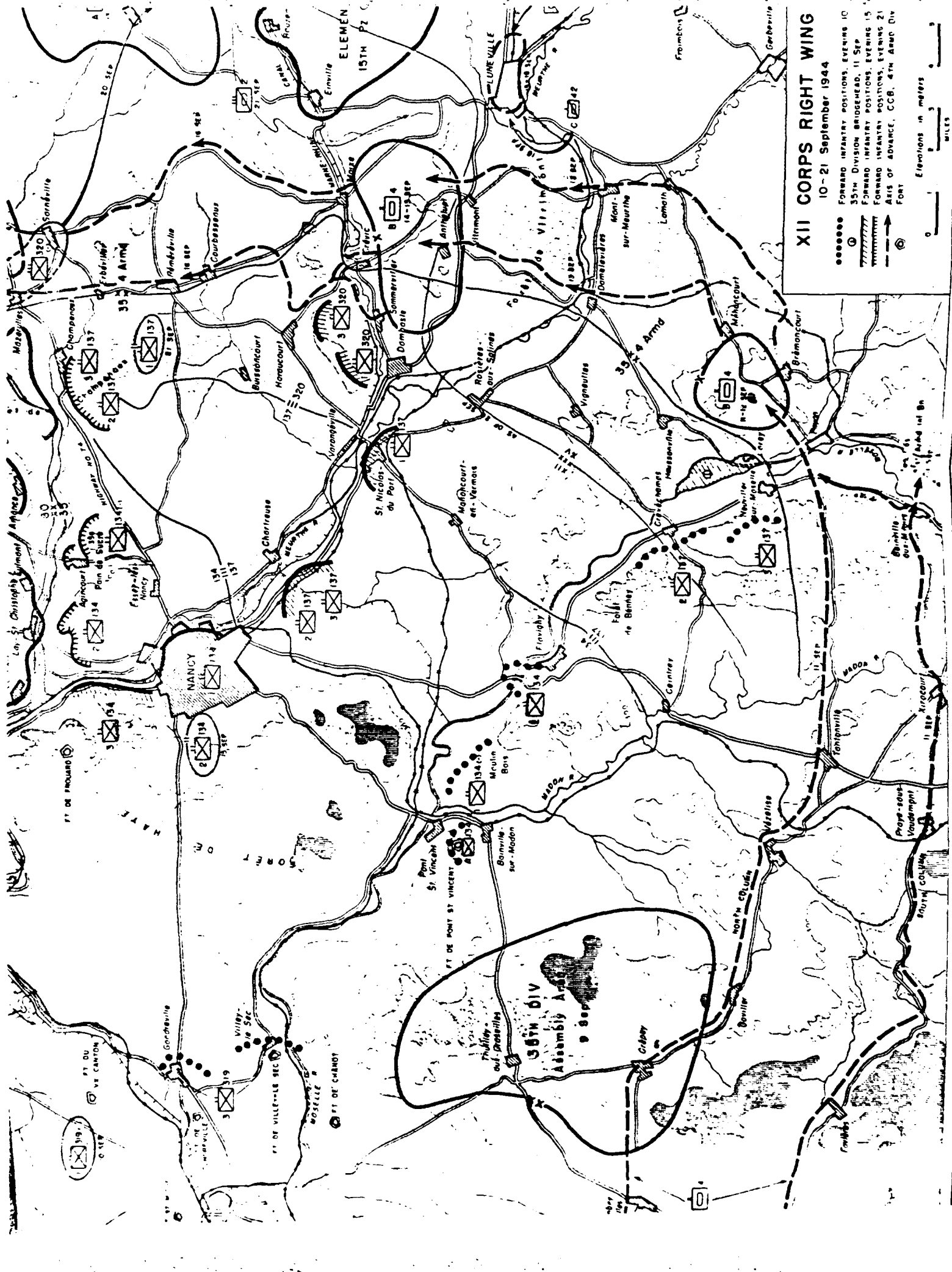


MAP NO. III



MAP NO. IV





XII CORPS RIGHT WING

10-21 September 1944

- Forward Infantry Positions, Evening 10
- 35th Division Bridgehead, 11 Sep
- Forward Infantry Positions, Evening 15
- Forward Infantry Positions, Evening 21
- Axis of Advance, CCB, 4th Armored Div
- Fort

Elevations in meters

MILES

APPENDIX B

NOTES

Chapter 2

¹Student Resource Packet C - The Forêt de Grémecey Battle, The Lorraine Campaign, Sep-Dec 1944 (USACGSC 1983), pp 293-294.

Chapter 3

¹After Action Report: Third U.S. Army, 1 August 1944 - 9 May 1945 (Published by 652nd Engr (TOPO) Bn and Co B, 942nd Engr Avn (TOPO) Bn, Regensburg, Germany, May 1945), I, p XIII.

²Brennton G. Wallace, Patton and His Third Army (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Company, 1946), p 97.

³Ibid.

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⁴After Action Report, I, pp 87-89, 99.

⁵F.W. Von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles: A Study of Employment of Armor in the Second World War (New York: Ballantine Books, 1956), pp 371-373.

⁶H. M. Cole, ed., The Lorraine Campaign (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1950), Map XXI.

⁷Ibid., Maps XXXIV-14, XXXIV-15, XXXV-14, XXXV-15.

⁸Ibid., p 244.

⁹Ibid., Map XXI.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p 244.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p 254.

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¹⁴After Action Report: Third U.S. Army, 1 August 1944 - 9 May 1945 (Published by 652nd Engr (TOPO) Bn and Co B, 942nd Engr Avn (TOPO) Bn, Regensburg, Germany, May 1945), II, G2 LXX, LXXI.

¹⁵Von Mellenthin, p 382.

¹⁶Cole, p 604.

¹⁷Wallace, p 100.

¹⁸After Action Report, II, Arty 7.

¹⁹W. J. K. Davies, German Army Handbook, 1939-1945 (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1974), p 56.

²⁰War Department Special Staff Historical Division, World War II: A Chronology (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), p 96.

²¹After Action Report, II, G2 LXXI.

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²²Von Mellenthin, p 378.

²³After Action Report, II, p G2 LXXI.

²⁴Ibid., I, p 61.

²⁵Ibid., p 79.

²⁶Ibid., p 82.

²⁷Ibid., p 85.

²⁸Ibid., II, p 82.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., p 84.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p 85.

³³Ibid., p 86.

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³⁴Davies, Chap 4.

³⁵Richard Schimpf, Operations of the 3 FS Division During the Invasion of France, Jun-Aug 1944, trans. by Cilgia l'Orsa (Allendorf, Germany, April 1947), pp 23-25.

Chapter 4

¹XII Corps G2/G3 Message Files, Static List #29.

²Cole, p 244.

³War Department Special Staff Historical Division,
p 91.

⁴Cole, p 244.

⁵Martin Blumenson, The Patton Papers (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), II, p 544.

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⁶After Action Report, I, LOI #9, HQ 12th Army Gp,
25 September 1944, p VII.

⁷Ibid., LOI #4, HQ 3rd Army, 25 September, p XIII.

⁸Ibid., p 244.

⁹Albert Emmerich, The Fighting of the First Army
in Lorraine and Northern Alsace (January 1947), p 1.

¹⁰Ibid, pp 1-3.

¹¹Kurt Von Einem, Report on the Engagements of the
XIII SS Corps in Lorraine During the Period from 1 September
to 15 November 1944 (1946), p 19.

¹²Ibid., p 3.

¹³Cole, p 245.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p 246.

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¹⁶F. W. Von Mellenthin, Report of the Chief of Staff, Summary, Army Group G (20 September - 3 December 1944), (no publishing date given), p 13.

¹⁷Cole, p 245.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p 244.

²⁰Student Resource Packet C, p 42.

²¹XII Corps G2/G3 Message Files, n. pag.

²²Student Resource Packet C, pp 44, 71.

²³Ibid., p 52.

²⁴After Action Report, I, p 87.

²⁵Student Resource Packet C, p 52.

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²⁶The 35th Infantry Division in World War II, 1941-1945 (Atlanta: Albert Love Enterprises, August 1946), Chap 5, n. pag.

²⁷Student Resource Packet C, p 11.

²⁸Ibid., p 44.

²⁹The 35th Infantry Division in World War II, 1941-1945, Chap 5, n. pag.

³⁰Student Resource Packet C, p 71.

³¹Ibid., p 44.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p 45.

³⁴Ibid., pp 52-53.

³⁵After Action Report, I, p 89.

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⁴⁶Student Resource Packet C, p 72.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸XII Corps G2/G3 Message Files, n. pag.

⁴⁹Student Resource Packet C, p 31.

⁵⁰Ibid., p 32.

⁵¹Ibid., p 13.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³XII Corps G2/G3 Message Files, n. pag.

⁵⁴Student Resource Packet C, p 32.

⁵⁵The 35th Infantry Division in World War II,
1941-1945, Chap 5, n. pag.

⁵⁶Student Resource Packet C, p 32.

Notes

⁵⁷The 35th Infantry Division in World War II,
1941-1945, Chap 5, n. pag.

⁵⁸Student Resource Packet C, p 32.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p 72.

⁶¹Ibid., p 31.

⁶²Ibid., p 73.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., p 32.

⁶⁵Ibid., p 14.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp 14-15.

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⁶⁸Ibid., p 73.

⁶⁹Ibid., p 33.

⁷⁰Ibid., p 32.

⁷¹Ibid., p 73.

⁷²Ibid., p 33.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Emmerich, pp 7-8.

⁷⁶Student Resource Packet C, p 45.

⁷⁷XII Corps G2/G3 Message Files, "G2 Estimate, 29
September 1944, Observations and Opinions", p 2.

⁷⁸Cole, p 250.

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⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Student Resource Packet C, p 54.

⁸¹Cole, pp 251-252.

⁸²Blumenson, pp 559-560.

⁸³Cole, p 254.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp 254-255.

⁸⁶The 35th Infantry Division in World War II,
1941-1945, Chap 5, n. pag.

⁸⁷After Action Report, I, p 100.

⁸⁸Blumenson, p 560.

⁸⁹The 35th Infantry Division in World War II,
1941-1945, Chap 5, n. pag.

APPENDIX C

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After Action Report: Third U.S. Army, 1 August 1944 - 9 May 1945. Regensburg, Germany: Published jointly by the 652nd Engr (TOPO) Bn and Co B, 942nd Engr Avn (TOPO) Bn, 15 May 1945.

Volume I: Operations - is a chronological summary of the operations of the Third U.S. Army. Included are daily chronologies, as well as monthly summaries; tables include summaries of friendly and enemy equipment losses; maps are provided with both friendly and enemy dispositions. Not many detailed references to the 35th Infantry Division or the Forêt de Grémecey battle - nonetheless this reference provides a good overview and perspective of the action from the Army level.

Volume II: Staff Section Reports - provides a chronology of the events between August 1944 and May 1945 in the staff sections of the Third U.S. Army; reports by all staff sections, from the primary G-staff down to the Chaplain and Public Affairs Staff are

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included. Detail on Forêt de Grémecey battle is not abundant but the extracts provided show this battle in relation to the multitude of other simultaneous actions.

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